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We reckon those words encapsulate what we all want for a perfect festive season – for it to be enjoyable and give us lasting memories, without having to spend the rest of the year paying it off! So that's what we've tried to help you with when putting this issue together. Our fashion, beauty, cookery and homes teams have scoured the high street to bring you their picks of the best quality and best value out there. And their sections are chock-full with easy ideas and advice to help you make the most of the season.

Now, maybe you're one of those readers (we know there are some of you) who have already done your Christmas gift buying and wrapping and are sitting (rather smugly) with your feet up as you flick through this issue... For the rest of you, we have what I'm proud to say is our best ever gift guide to help you find the perfect present for everyone on your list. There are gorgeous options for every budget – be sure to dive in before you head out to the shops.

For the clever crafters among you, there are some cute makes to spark your creativity – I think you'll have fun with these! And, having seen Fern Britton's knitting bag on her cover shoot, I realise that our pages are spurring on some high-profile makers; Fern is halfway through one of our knits from earlier this year and says that our fab patterns have rekindled her love of the craft. I hope she enjoys making our doggy jumper (page 173) for any four-legged friends!

Fern loves the magic of the festive season and she shares her typical family celebrations with us and tells us about her best Christmas, which resulted in a marriage proposal from a certain TV chef! What I love most about Fern, though, is how real she is. She shares a few words of wisdom with those of us who suffer from a festive meltdown: 'It's perfectly normal to have a Christmas moment. I can guarantee you that women all over the land will be taking a moment or two at some point on Christmas Day to go to the back door and take a few breaths of fresh air. So if that is you, take heart – you are not alone.' Well said, Fern!

Merry Christmas to all of you from everyone at Prima!

Gaby

GABY HUDDART, EDITOR

Don't miss the January issue, **ON SALE 3 December**



I'm so loving my buys from our new fashion collection with Elvi – see p32 for more!



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‘Christmas is *magical* apart from the sprouts!’

Fern Britton talks to Prima about the best Christmas she has ever had, what makes it special now and why 2015 was a very good year

TV presenter and author Fern Britton lives in Buckinghamshire with her husband, TV chef Phil Vickery. She has four children, twins Jack and Harry, 22, Grace, 18, and Winnie, 14. Her latest book is *A Good Catch*.

Even now that the children are grown up, Christmas is a magical time in our house. We have never discussed the possibility that the magic doesn't exist – it just does! The run-up is almost as magical as the day itself; going to parties, seeing old friends, Christmas carols and choirs – and decorating the house. We're used to sharing Christmas between houses because my ex-husband and I divorced when the kids were young so a bit of coming and going is normal. But, this year, all four of the children will be home for some or part of it. Now that the eldest are over 18, they can do as they like, which makes it all the more lovely when they choose to spend time together.

I'm very influenced by what Christmas was like when I was little. My parents divorced when I was young, so growing up, we would always share Christmas between my mother and her brother, my Uncle Paul. Both houses were stuffed full of tinsel, decorations, snowmen, a huge tree and lots of lights and it was just joyful. They were magical times and very much what I try to emulate now.

The twins' birthday is 14 December, so that's always an important day for me.

They were premature, so I ended up bringing them home on Christmas Eve, both wearing little Christmas suits. I'll never forget it because in many ways it was my birth, too. They are independent young men now but we still always celebrate their birthday somehow. Last year we were in Cornwall, so we celebrated their 21st at Rick Stein's restaurant.

We always get the tree and decorate it on the first weekend in December.

And I definitely embrace the spirit of Christmas – it's a case of 'More is more' and 'Abandon taste all ye who enter here!' in our house. It's all tinsel, glitz and glitter and there's nothing tasteful about it, I'm afraid. We tend to accumulate a few new decorations each year and our decorations box is now larger than the Harrods Christmas department! And the icing on the cake is masses of fairy lights – there's nothing quite like a dark house lit only by a roaring fire and fairy lights.

When it comes to Christmas Day, we're very much your average family.

Father Christmas always comes to all of us – without fail! Phil always brings me tea in bed, which is lovely. We have Christmas lunch, but we're not slaves to tradition so the food is different every

year. We all like different things and we are all very spoilt: I like lamb and no one else does, so Phil always makes me lamb, and then he makes turkey or pork – or both – for everyone else.

I realise that I'm very lucky to say that in the 17 years Phil and I have been together, I've never once cooked Christmas lunch. I lay the table, put out the crackers, get the house all tidy and do all the niceties, but I don't have to do any food, not even the bread sauce. We always have Christmas pudding and I adore brandy butter so that's always on the menu, as is Christmas cake, which lasts well into the new year. And there's only one other tradition that we always adhere to: my mother and I both dislike sprouts but on Christmas Day we have to have one each – and that's it for the year.

After lunch, we have a family quiz.

I always have to be quizmaster and we divide into teams, with rounds for all levels and skills. So there's always a culinary round, football for all the boys, art and music for Jack and Harry, plus a geography round for Grace – as she is currently studying geography at university – and a Harry Potter round for Winnie.

Every year, someone different will come to celebrate with us. Last year, we had an old friend to stay and this year ➔

**‘I definitely embrace
the spirit of Christmas
– there’s nothing like
a dark house lit only
by fairy lights’**

we're getting together with some neighbours for festive food and wine. We don't tend to throw big parties ourselves, but we love going to them because it's great to see old friends and colleagues. However, when we are at home, there's a lot of closing the door and really just hunkering down.

I'm very organised about presents.

I bought my first one in September and I love finding the right thing for the right person. Sometimes Phil and I make foodie gifts together. A couple of years ago, we made Cornish hampers, with Cornish salt, chocolate and other delicacies. Last year, we made pots of mint jelly and blackberry jam and sloe gin, which went down very well.

I make sure there's no pressure on the kids from me – to do anything. We can celebrate on 17 October as far as I'm concerned, as long as we get some time when we're all together. When they go to uni, you have to let them off the leash and be happy for them – which is easier for me to say now as I'm three years into it!

I try really hard not to keep pestering them with texts saying 'love you' or 'how are you?'. I'm very aware that now the boys are young men, they prefer to do their own thing. If I haven't heard from them, I might send a newsy text once a week. As they get older, they are pretty good at calling me, but I've had to accept that they have their own lives.

That didn't stop me having a good cry when they first left home. That evening, I poured a glass of wine and wept, thinking, 'They've gone!' But then I started looking at the positives: there is less laundry to do, food stays in the fridge for longer – and I even get to watch what I want on TV! Also, we have developed an adult relationship and I can share more with them about my life, too, which is nice. I do still have Winnie at home, but she's very independent and gets herself to and from school.

My most memorable Christmas was in 1999. I spent Christmas Eve manically making mince pies for my new boyfriend Phil who, even though he was a chef, said he'd never had a mince pie. Halfway



attention. So if that's you, take heart – you're not alone.

My only advice is: cool it. If you haven't vacuumed, no one will notice. Although do try to make sure you don't run out of loo paper, which is my worst fear. And whoever is in charge needs to make sure they build in some time to put their feet up for a bit.

Fitness is important to me, but I give myself a break from exercise over Christmas.

My motto is 'Everything in moderation'. Grace, Winnie and I love going to the gym together and we're also lucky enough to

have some equipment at home. So, who knows, we might have a little dabble over Christmas but it definitely won't be anything too full on.

I'll be having a break from writing, too. I tend to write between May and October. I'm now on book six and, as the years have gone by, I've started to allow myself to think, 'I can really do this!' Of course, there are days I enjoy and days where I think it's all rubbish. But when I'm writing I'm very disciplined and don't allow myself to stop until I've done 2,000 words a day, no matter how long it takes.

2015 has been a fantastic year – the best for a long time. The family are finally settled. Everyone is happy and doing well. And I cycled 1,100 miles from John O'Groats to Land's End with 26 women and something magical happened. We laughed, we swore – it was a real fellowship of women – and we raised £150,000 for Genesis Research Trust, which is the charity I support. I did another ride in Kerala in September and I can't wait for my next charity ride in May 2016.

One thing I never do is make New Year's resolutions. I forget them after two minutes! Instead, I just say, 'I'm going to try really hard at everything this year,' and that way I can never say I've failed!

• *Fern's novel A Good Catch (HarperCollins, £12.99) is out now. In the New Year, Fern will be presenting a new BBC game show called For What it's Worth*

through, he disappeared off to London and came back four hours later, sat me down in a chair in front of the Aga with my apron on, cross and covered in flour. Then he got down on one knee and proposed. You can't really top that!

The best present I've ever given was to Phil. He really wanted a Land Rover and a lovely man called Chris in our village was selling his. We agreed Chris would deliver it at 8.30am on Christmas morning and so at 8.20am, I gave Phil a box with a key in and told him to look out of the window. There was the Land Rover of his dreams coming down the hill with a number plate that read 'HP1 XMAS'. He was beside himself. That was probably my finest hour and, since then, I have to confess I've been a bit rubbish!

When the kids were younger, I used to get stressed about making Christmas perfect. Not any more – that pressure has gone. These days I get more sleep so I'm less exhausted, the children are nice human beings and I'm much more in control of my time, but the main thing is that I accept that it doesn't have to be perfect – after all, it's just Sunday lunch, with some nice films on the telly.

It's perfectly normal to have a 'Christmas moment' though. I can guarantee you that women all over the land will be taking a moment or two at some point on Christmas Day to go to the back door and take a few breaths of fresh air because no one is paying them

FERN IN BRIEF

This Christmas I'd like...

A six pack, please.

Tell us a secret... My problem is that everyone knows everything about me and there are no secrets!

What makes you laugh? My kids – who ridicule me mercilessly.

Plan B career? I would have loved to have been a midwife.

Your greatest wish? Other than my children's happiness it's to stay fit and cycle until I'm 70.

Last time you cried? This morning, when I remembered something from my childhood.

When were you last happy? I've truly been happy all of this year – 2015 has been wonderful.

What do you order in the pub? I rarely go to the pub but if I do it will be a lime and soda, red wine or a gin and tonic.

What are you best at? Doing the splits, keeping the house tidy, gardening and giving tickles.

What does love feel like?

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'We can celebrate Christmas in October as far as I'm concerned, as long as we get some time together as a family'



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You have a fabulous deal this month with 20% off* one of our beauty editor's favourite haircare brands – she's addicted to using the **Geranium & Neroli Elasticizer** pre-shampoo mask (£31.50) on her hair twice a week for extra gloss.

Another of her favourites is the **Body Building Shampoo** (£17), which is great for fine hair or those who crave extra volume. And for thinning or weak strands – or those who simply want healthier looking hair – **Trichotherapy** (£120) is an award-winning three-step regime. Happy shopping!

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Looking to refresh your winter wardrobe or snap up a showstopping frock in time for the party season? Let us give you a head start with the chance to WIN £250 to spend at Jacques Vert. Its spotlight-stealing evening wear features super-glam LBDs, fur-trimmed dresses and embellished gowns. And for something extra special, we love its premium party range, designed by Lorcan Mullany.



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Party looks with *PIZZAZZ*

From a touch of flirty feathers and lace to sexy, shimmering sparkle, this season's occasion wear is all-out glam!

Tux luxe

Prefer to wear trousers? It's easy to update your favourite black suit. Slip on a light-catching sequin top underneath and drape an on-trend feather cape over your shoulders. Decorative and edgy, it'll give your look a fashion lift.

Blazer, £149; **trousers**, £99; **jumper**, £89; all 8-18, Fenn Wright Manson. Feather **cape**, £65, Biba at House of Fraser. **Earrings**, £15, Coast



Turn up the volume

So flattering and outrageously gorgeous, a dramatic, oversized full skirt with a tucked-in top will shrink your waist and make the most of troublesome hips and thighs. This gorgeous outfit proves you don't have to go skimpy to look seriously stunning.

Lace **top**, £35, 8-20, Debenhams.

Full **skirt**, £179, 6-18, Coast.

Black **stilettos**, £38, 3-9, Next ➔

Shine like a star

Want a special evening outfit with the ultimate wow factor? Few things beat the impact of a floor-skimming sequin dress. In a red carpet-worthy frock like this, you're guaranteed to turn heads for all the right reasons.

Sequin **maxi**, £425, 6-18, Coast.
Metallic **heels**, £45, 3-9, Next



A sprinkle of glitter

Nothing stops the show like a high-wattage beaded cocktail dress – it'll make you sparkle all night long. Simple in shape but maximum in impact, a frock this striking needs little accessorising. Slip on some barely there black sheer tights and you're good to go!

Beaded **dress**, £75, 6-22, Dorothy Perkins. **Earrings**, £7.99, New Look. Sheer **tights**, £6, s-xl, Marks & Spencer ➔

Roll up, roll up

If you're looking for a trendier take on this season's party wear, look no further than this sequin roll-neck. It screams you're in the know and, teamed with a tassel skirt, you've mastered two trends in one outfit.

Sequin **top**, £39.99; tassel **skirt**, £24.99, both xs-l, Lindex.
Earrings, £7.99, H&M. Black **tights**, £6, s-xl, Charnos. Glitter **heels**, £125, 3-8, Ted Baker



Jump to it

This black lace jumpsuit is a modern alternative to an LBD. Modest enough for the office and glam enough for after-work drinks, this one-piece wonder is a day-to-night winner. Love dressing in all-black? Mixing textures will ensure you're cool this Yule!

Lace jumpsuit, £129, 6-22, Per Una Speciale at Marks & Spencer. Marabou stole, £59, John Lewis. Hair clips, £12, Accessorize ➔

Your feathered friend

Romantic, decadent and dreamy, feathers are this season's favourite adornment – a softer, gentler approach to embellishment that's so feminine. Keep the rest of your outfit slim-fitting to strike a well-balanced party look. For best results, wear with messy dressy hair and wow factor earrings.

Feather **cape**, £110, Collection 8 at Phase Eight. Sequin **top**, £119, 6-18; gem **earrings**, £19, both Coast

A woman with dark hair styled in an updo is smiling and posing. She is wearing a silver sequined top and a matching skirt. She is also wearing large, ornate earrings and a beaded bracelet. The background is dark and out of focus.

Find a winning combo

When you're overflowing with invites and need more than one look, investing in separates is the party-perfect solution. Try a matching top and skirt combo – it has the same amount of wow as a dress, but you'll get more fashion mileage as you can team each with casuals once the party's over.

Sequin **top**, £79; **skirt**, £89, both 8-18, Phase Eight. **Earrings**, £8.50, Wallis. Beaded **bracelet**, £15, Accessorize ➔

Back to black

Never underestimate the power of a beautiful black dress. It cleverly camouflages flaws and showcases assets. Want to create an element of surprise? Try a seductive detailed back – sexy backs are the new cleavage! We love this goddess dress that oozes red carpet glamour.

Maxi dress, £180, 8-18, John Lewis. **Earrings**, £12, Jon Richard at Debenhams

Go red hot

A beautiful dress with sleeves is the holy grail and we've found it with this notice-me-now red dress. Sexy sleeves? Check. High neckline? Check. Longer length? Check. If you don't want everything on show, then this is the dress for you.

Maxi dress, £80, 8-18, Wallis.
Pendant necklace, £7.99, H&M.
Glitter clutch, £12; **glitter heels**,
£18, 3-8, both F&F at Tesco

Styling: Allie Wilson
Assisted by: Helen Johnson
Photography: Romi Stern
Hair & Make-up: Julie Read



The outfit makers

'Tis the season to sparkle, so finish off your party look with one of these dance floor dazzlers

Jewelled sandals, £34.99, 3-9, New Look

Black glitter courts, £99, 3-8, Mint Velvet

Rose gold courts, £22.99, 3-9, New Look

Pom-pom pumps, £28, 3-9, Next

Pink bejewelled pumps, £25, 3-8, Shoe Box at Very

Gold ribbon sandals, £22, 3-8, F&F at Tesco

Glitter block heels, £45, 3-8, Oasis

Pink embellished courts, £140, 3-8, Ted Baker

It's shoe time

From fancy flats to head-turning heels, these showstopping shoes will make every outfit dance floor-worthy. Ready, steady, party!

Party bag

Turn up the glamour with a beautiful outfit-boosting clutch. These ones certainly have bags of style!

Glitter lips, £243,
Lulu Guinness
at QVC

Pearl clasp, £65,
Accessorize

Black sequin,
£19.99,
New Look

Pink envelope,
£35, Coast

Gold diamanté,
£139, Dune

Pink jewelled,
£24, Very

Gold lace, £32,
Accessorize

Bling it on

At this time of year, there's no such thing as too much glitz. Pile on dazzling jewels, chunky cocktail rings and pretty pearls – we say, the more the merrier!

Ribbon and gem necklace, £15, Next

Pearl chain necklace, £35, Coast

Silver and rose gold bangles, £10 for both, Oasis

Layered pearl ring, £19, Coast

Pink gem necklace, £7.99, H&M

Star earrings, £15; moon brooch, £12, both Accessorize

Pearl stud earrings, £3, BHS

‘It’s Christmas party season – time to dazzle with some statement jewellery’

 To sign up for our fantastic free newsletter full of fashion advice you'll love, simply text your email address followed by PRIMA to 84499 – texts to this number are charged at your standard network rate, never more*.

*Standard network rates vary dependent on your phone provider. By texting into this service you are opting in to receive messages from us by email and SMS. You can opt out from SMS by texting STOP to 84499 and from email by clicking 'unsubscribe'.



**Christmas scene
PJ set, £12,**
available from
16 November

*Pretty PJs for
sweet dreams*

A cosy Christmas

From eye-catching accessories
to luxurious nightwear and knits,
George at Asda is full of festive fizz



**Faux fur
earmuffs, £6**

S

prinkle a little Christmas sparkle!
Whether you're looking for
the perfect present to lavish
on a loved one, or simply
spoiling yourself, the new
collection at George at Asda
has all you'll need for a fabulous
festive season. Choose from
sophisticated statement pieces
in luxe fabrics, or intricate
accessories and beautifully
bejewelled bags – or give the
gift of a sophisticated sequined
sweater, a Fairisle-style knit or
stylish-but-snuggly sleepwear!



**Sequin stag
jumper, £14.
Grey zip
trousers,
£14**



**Knitted gem
tunic, £20**



**Fairisle
embellished
jumper, £18,**
available from
8 November

*Spread some
Christmas cheer*

Glittering gifts for the girls!



**LEFT: Pink
slipper boots,
£10. RIGHT:
Camel sequin
beanie, £6**



Quick fixes to glam up your LBD

Turn last year's little black dress into the life and soul of this year's party with our gorgeous style tricks... and, if you fancy a splurge, we have some fabulous new LBDs

LUXE LAYERING

Don't want to reveal your upper arms? Wear a sleeveless shift dress over a white blouse or lace shirt. Sorted!



Blouse,
£28, 6-22,
Next

Lace blouse, £35,
8-24, Marks &
Spencer

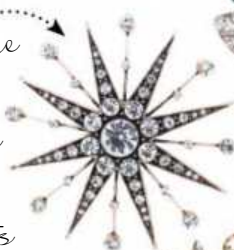
RAMP UP YOUR ACCESSORIES

Nothing says cocktail hour quite like a bit of bling. Dazzling jewels will give your LBD a new lease of life.



Gold clutch,
£39.99, H&M

Brooches are back! Use them to add twinkle to simple shifts.



Star brooch,
£10, Accessorize

Beautiful headpieces up the ante of any party style!



Red fascinator,
£60, Debenhams



Gem earrings,
£27, Mikey
London at
Debenhams



Necklace, £25,
Accessorize

DON'T FORGET YOUR JACKET

A chic topper can transform an outfit. Choose luxe faux fur or a beaded beauty – the more eye-catching it is, the better.



Green velvet,
£75, 4-16,
Topshop



Gold embellished,
£69.99, one
size, Mango



Black sequin,
£79.99,
xs-xl,
Mango



Black beaded,
£100, 4-16,
Topshop



Faux fur,
£149, 6-18,
Monsoon

A dressy jacket is much cooler than a pashmina or everyday coat



Beaded kimono,
£79.99,
6-20, H&M

UPGRADE YOUR LBD

Turn up the charm and choose an LBD with lots of lace, sequins or feathers.



Dress,
£169, 8-18,
Phase Eight



Off-the-shoulder lace, £55, 8-18, Wallis



Embellished velvet,
£129, 8-22,
Monsoon



Sequin pencil, £189,
8-18, Damsel
in a Dress



Lace flared,
£55, 10-32,
Simply Be



Silk overlay,
£139, 6-18,
Coast



Feather hem,
£120, 8-18,
Stylist Pick



Sequin strapless,
£169, 6-18,
Coast



Strappy velvet,
£60, 6-22,
Next



Lace skater,
£55, 10-24,
Very

ADD SHOWSTOPPING SHOES

Swoon-worthy shoes add glamour in an instant. Team pointed toes, metallics or glitter with an LBD for extra style points.



Gold striped,
£25, 3-8,
ASOS



Feather stiletto, £75,
3-8, River
Island



Velvet peep-toe, £46,
3-8, Topshop



Glitter brogues,
£29.99,
3-8, H&M

A pop of colour will give an unexpected twist

NECKLINE KNOW-HOW

Slip on a fancy collar or cape to give simple necklines an of-the-moment edge. It's an easy way to add drama.

Black feather collar, £50,
Debenhams



Faux fur collar, £39,
Coast



Jewelled shirt bib,
£5, George



Blue feather collar, £49,
John Lewis



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*Standard network rates vary depending on your phone provider. By texting into this service, you are opting in to receive messages from us by email and SMS. You can opt out from SMS by texting STOP to 84499 and from email by clicking 'unsubscribe'.

Dare to dazzle

Party season is almost upon us – do you have your outfit sorted yet? Stand out from the crowd in the NEW hotly anticipated Elvi Prima premium collection and be the best dressed at any Christmas do



Style it!

An A-line skirt will not only hide your bum, it will magically make your waist appear smaller, too!

Textured metallic **top**, £65; quilted pewter **skirt**, £79, both 14-26, Elvi Prima premium collection. Jet **earrings**, £15, Jon Richard at Debenhams. Floral stone **ring**, £12, Principles by Ben de Lisi at Debenhams. Jewelled **heels**, £140, 3-8, Ted Baker



Teal feather hem **dress**, £149, 14-26, (also available in black), Elvi Prima premium collection. **Earrings**, £7, Wallis. **Clutch**, £29.99, Mango



Style it!
You can wear the skirt and top as separates. Lace sleeves keep you covered but still looking sexy.

Black lace **top**, £69; matching **skirt**, £69, both 14-26, Elvi Prima premium collection. **Necklace**, £19.99, New Look Premium. Stacking **rings**, £15, xs-l, Accessorize. **Clutch**, £45, Untold at House of Fraser



Style it!
This straight-cut dress will disguise a not-so-trim tum and turn heads at the same time!

Sequin **dress**, £129, 14-26, Elvi Prima premium collection. Collar **necklace**, £18, Mood by Jon Richard at Debenhams. **Earrings**, £9, Wallis



Style it!

Designed to deliver after-dark impact, a V-neck is your secret weapon if you have big boobs.

Lace-front **jumpsuit**, £99, 14-26, Elvi Prima premium collection. **Earrings**, £10, Jon Richard at Debenhams. **Bangles**, £3 for set, Primark. **Bracelet**, £12, Jon Richard at Debenhams. Metal **clutch**, £59, Biba at House of Fraser. Jewelled **heels**, £140, 3-8, Ted Baker



Sequin bomber jacket, £119; cami, £35; embellished trousers, £69, all 14-26, Elvi Prima premium collection. Earrings, £19, Coast. Stacking rings, £15, xs-l, Accessorize

Style it!
A glitzy bomber jacket and trophy trousers are a modern alternative to the LBD.

‘Curvier women are not offered what their size 10 friends are, especially when it comes to modern evening wear. I hope this showstopping Elvi Prima premium collection changes the misconception that larger women want to be invisible.’

Amanda Marcantonio, Prima’s senior fashion editor

ALL CLOTHES FROM THE NEW ELVI PRIMA PREMIUM COLLECTION ARE AVAILABLE TO BUY NOW FROM **ELVI.CO.UK**

Go to prima.co.uk to watch our behind the scenes video from this fabulous photo shoot 🎥

Sequin tassel dress, £129, 14-26, Elvi Prima premium collection. Ring, £10, xs-l, Accessorize. Clutch, £65, Phase Eight



Fall in love *with* Christmas *all over again!*

We reveal how to sidestep unwanted stress and put the magic and merriment back into your festivities

Adore the traditions, trees and tinsel but end up feeling fraught rather than festive? What with the shopping, organising and cooking, it's hardly surprising that many of us are Christmas crackered by the time the turkey is on the table. In fact, research by the Stress Management Society found one in 20 people consider Christmas more stressful than a burglary, while over half of us will have an alcoholic drink before lunch on Christmas Day to cope with the pressure. There's nothing wrong with a cheeky Buck's Fizz, of course, but we asked psychologist Emma Kenny (ekenny.co.uk) for some even smarter ways to stay sane.





Find your Christmas X factor

 **Want to turn your home into a winter wonderland,** rustling up festive feasts that would make Nigella purr? The message seems to be that, whatever the stress, it's worth it in the end. But that's not always true: you may miss the children's faces when they open their gifts because you're engrossed in a glazed carrot recipe. The key is to step back and look at the bigger picture. 'Identify the one thing that's really important to you at Christmas and focus on that,' says Emma. Perhaps it's getting the family together or seeing treasured friends. 'Prioritise your to-do list and let the things that don't help you reach your goal float away.'



Follow Santa's lead and enlist some helpers

 **No one can remain sane if it falls on them to do everything.** 'If you always take on the load at Christmas, ask yourself why,' says Emma. 'Often, it's because you don't want to ask others for help, but chances are your family will want to lend a hand.' So try handing the mince pie-making baton over to your partner and leave the gift wrapping to the kids. 'Okay, so their efforts might not be as good, but as well as taking some of the pressure off you, it'll create more family memories and that's what Christmas is all about.' And if it goes wrong? So what! It's these 'disasters' that you can laugh about for years to come.



Remember that you do have a choice

 **'The stress that you experience often doesn't come from Christmas, but from yourself,'** says Emma. In other words, no one is forcing you to spend Christmas Eve making gravity-defying canapés. 'It's important to remember that we create our own experiences – and you do have a choice. You could even scrap the turkey lunch and order curry if that's what you want to do!' And while you may not always get to choose the people and circumstances you're in at Christmas, you can choose how you deal with them. 'It may appear that a certain someone drives you mad, but it's up to you how you respond,' adds Emma.



Focus on experiences not things

 **Money is often a huge source of holiday stress,** but reassure yourself with the proven knowledge that it's experiences not material items that bring the most joy. 'Switch your focus from expensive purchases to creating lasting memories,' says Emma. 'For children, the thrill of waking up at 5am to find a stocking at the end of their beds is what they remember, not what Santa brought. And it's the same principle with adults. Studies reveal that thoughtful gifts are more gratefully received than expensive ones.' So try to change your focus from what you are going to buy to what you and your family are going to do together.



Be ruthless with your diary

 **When you hear yourself saying to a friend 'we must meet up before Christmas', ask yourself why.** Maybe booking a date in the New Year would make more sense. 'If you become overwhelmed, it's hardly surprising you struggle to find the Christmas magic,' says Emma. 'Don't be afraid to say no to things you don't have time for – or just don't want to do.' Instead, carve out time just for yourself. 'Remember, you're no good to anyone if you're exhausted,' adds Emma. 'When you're happy, your family and friends will benefit.' So map out some 'me time' minutes every day, such as having a manicure or going for a walk.



Be more childlike and have fun!

 **Think back to last Christmas and the moments that felt fun, relaxing and most enjoyable.** Who were you with? What were you doing? Perhaps you were playing charades with the family, watching *The Sound of Music* with your husband, or singing along to Michael Bublé in the car. 'Whatever brought you joy, plan to spend more time with these people or doing that same activity this year and you'll create more happy moments,' says Emma. Look to the younger members of the family, too. 'Children prioritise having fun and playing, so take their lead by turning off the TV and playing Scrabble instead.'



3 ways to prevent a major meltdown

- **SING YOURSELF HAPPY** Whether it's a carol service or belting out *I Will Survive* when you're queuing to get out of the supermarket car park, studies have found that singing is a proven way to reduce stress. In fact, one Swedish study found that because carol singing makes you adopt a calm breathing pattern, it has similar benefits to yoga.
- **SQUEEZE MORE** Forget kissing under the mistletoe – hugging brings happiness. 'Science has shown hugging is the fastest way to get the love hormone oxytocin flowing into the body,' says happiness coach Susanna Halonen (happyologist.co.uk). 'This lowers blood pressure and levels of the stress hormone cortisol.'
- **BE THANKFUL** Feeling overwhelmed? Jot down things you're grateful for right now for an instant happiness hit. Being specific is much more effective than making a general list – and it will give you perspective.

‘It’s the most wonderful time of the year!’

Meet the women for whom truly amazing things have happened over the festive season

‘This Christmas marks the beginning of our next adventure’

What happens when you meet Mr Right but the timing is all wrong? Natalie Wright, 34, from Harrogate, explains how she made it work.

The air was getting chillier, the shops were blaring out festive tunes. But instead of starting my Christmas shopping, I was packing, about to leave the British winter for two years’ voluntary work in Zambia.

It was a big step but, although the time had felt right, there was just one snag, by the name of Jim Calvert. Because isn’t it just typical? You find a man you really like just before you’re both due to leave the country!

I’d been pretty much single since leaving university, but when Jim came rushing late into the training course run by the volunteering charity VSO, I thought, “Oh, he’s nice.” And we clicked – Jim was a primary school teacher and I worked with kids in child protection, so we had that in common.

Of course, it couldn’t go anywhere, not when our lives were both about to change; he was going to Nepal with the charity. But we’d managed to squeeze in two fun dates. In a way, it helped that we were on a timer – all my barriers came down and we really relaxed together.

Now I was packing, heading off into the unknown for two years. Amid all the nerves and excitement I felt sad. I liked Jim a lot – and I feared I might never see him again.

In Zambia, there was so much to take in – blazing heat, a new culture and a busy job helping child protection officers. I spent Christmas on the beach, adjusting to my new reality.

I poured it all out in emails to Jim. By then, he was in Nepal working with local schools. We managed to Skype a few times and every time we spoke, I felt closer to him. He understood the ups and downs of volunteering, and I learned to trust his advice.

Then, one day, seven months later, I received a text from him: “I’m coming over if you’ll have me.”

I was so excited as I went to meet him at the airport. Then there he was – cheeky grin, tall, dark and jet-lagged. I threw my arms around him and hugged him tight. Later Jim told me: “That’s the moment I knew you were The One.”

By the end of the holiday, I was sure, too. But how could we ever make this work? I promised to join him in Nepal for Christmas; we’d take it from there.

Nepal was breathtaking but freezing. We decked out a plant in his flat with Zambian decorations, trekked in the

mountains and then, snuggled in his apartment, we finally said: “I love you.”

That was it. No matter what happened, we knew that we’d be spending the following Christmas together.

The first few months without him were very hard but then, suddenly, the funding for Jim’s placement was abruptly cancelled. He flew over to join me in Zambia in April... and six weeks later, I found out I was pregnant!

It was a surprise, but we were thrilled. When we flew home, I was amazed by how much my life had changed. I’d arrived in Africa single with no ties. Now I had a partner, a pregnancy and a whole different future. My friends and family could see how happy we were; with Jim, it has always been easy. We have fun, we laugh – we just fit.

Now, this Christmas, we will finally be settled in our cosy, two-bed home in Harrogate with a log burner and a beautifully decorated tree. And, best of all, there will be three of us – me, Jim and our beautiful nine-month-old daughter Katie.

Volunteering was an amazing adventure but, when I look at my wonderful partner and smiling baby girl, I know the best is yet to come.’

• For more information about volunteering through VSO, visit vsointernational.org ➔

Inspiring lives

‘Volunteering was an
adventure – but I know
the best is yet to come’

Natalie wears: Lace dress, Jacques Vert. Shoes, Dune at Very. Earrings, from a selection, Claudia Bradby. **Jim wears:** Shirt, Vivella at Austin Reed. Trousers, Antony Morato. Shoes, Jones Bootmaker. **Katie wears:** Dress, Mamas & Papas at Mothercare. White Christmas tree, Very. Wrapping paper, WHSmith. Ribbon, Jane Means. Baubles and decorations, Gisella Graham. Lights, Lights4fun



'Buster has made Christmas special again'

Susan Jones, 36, from Letchworth, Hertfordshire, reveals how a clever black Labrador helped to get her life back.

No matter how grown-up I am, some things about Christmas with my family always stay the same.

Trimming the tree, Mum busy in the kitchen, the family chatting and laughing. But 2009 was extra special as I'd recently left my job at a beauty salon to set up my own. Business was booming, and I'd had to keep working despite coming down with a winter bug. So, as I tucked into my Christmas dinner, I finally let myself relax.

I still felt run-down in the New Year while out shopping with my sister Paula, 35, when suddenly I felt an excruciating pain in my back. When I returned home, it got worse until I could barely move and so my parents rushed me to A&E.

The next few days passed in a blur of confusion, fear and tests. The pain subsided but all feeling from my chest down was gone. I couldn't move my legs. Finally, a doctor told me that I was suffering from something called Transverse Myelitis, an autoimmune disease that had developed alongside my winter flu and attacked my spinal cord. My paralysis was permanent. And, just like that, I'd lost everything.

The following year was tough. I gave up my beauty business to a friend, went through residential rehab, then moved back into my parents' bungalow. I was reliant on them as if I was a child again.

That Christmas was the hardest – same decorations, but I couldn't put them up. Mum was in the kitchen, but I couldn't help. My friends dropped by with gifts, then went out to parties while I sat helpless at home.

Throughout it all, though, Paula refused to let me give up. She helped me apply for an accessible bungalow, and told me I needed an assistance dog to help with my day-to-day life.



So, in 2013, the charity Canine Partners brought Buster to visit. The moment I saw those melting black Labrador eyes I thought he was such a lovely boy. He disappeared into my spare room, came back with a teddy bear and gently laid it on my lap – so sweet! It was love.

After a two-week training course, Buster was mine and it was only then that I learned how clever he was.

Until you're paralysed, you have no idea how frustrating something like a dropped pen can be. Buster picked things up when they fell, fetched the post and unloaded the washing machine. If I fell out of my wheelchair, he'd get the phone and wait with me until help arrived.

But it wasn't just about the practicalities. I hadn't

been out alone since my illness. My confidence was crushed – I was scared of falling, of people staring, of feeling invisible. But now I had no choice – Buster needed walking! Slowly, he helped me rediscover my independent self. It felt like I was getting my life back.

That Christmas, Paula helped get the decorations out, Buster passed me the baubles and I hung them up.

Buster has given me an unbelievable gift – my confidence. This year will be my third Christmas with him and my life has changed so much. I now have a specially adapted car, which I use to take him to agility training every week and we also go out to see friends. I just couldn't imagine life without him.'

• To find out more, go to caninepartners.org.uk



Susan wears: Cardigan, Long Tall Sally. Top, Phase Eight. Trousers, Chesca. Necklace, Butterfly. Shoes, Miss KG at Very. Buster the dog wears: Collar, lead, both Holly & Lil. Bluebell sofa, Sofa.com. Sheepskin rug, Very. Fur throw, George. Cushion, Debenhams

I share my big day with everyone'

Having your birthday on 25 December can be tricky, but aromatherapist Holly Fairburn, 46, from St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, wouldn't change it.

When I came into the world, I was a tiny bit famous. I was the first

Christmas Day baby to be born in Crawley hospital in 1968. We still have the cutting from the local newspaper story!

Mum went into labour shortly after sitting down for dinner, Dad rushed her into hospital and I arrived at 6pm. Of course, they had to name me Holly.

Growing up, I always loved my festive birthday. Every year, I'd see the lights go up in people's windows, hear choirs singing and see people rushing around getting excited. It would feel like the whole world was building up to my big day.

On Christmas Eve, a lovely meal would be made especially

'There's such a sense of anticipation, as if anything can happen'

for me, then the next day the whole family would join me to sing *Happy Birthday* and play games. Best of all were the joint presents – people would combine their budgets, so many of my gifts were extra special.

Later, there were times when I wished I could have a normal birthday. When I was 20, I went travelling and spent my 21st in Australia. I woke up and the only festive sign was a picture of a

Christmas tree I'd tacked to the wall. I spent the day sunning myself on Bondi Beach, but I just didn't enjoy it at all!

For better or worse, I was an England Christmas birthday girl. I wanted the warm feeling of my family, the carols and the sparkly decorations, otherwise it just didn't feel right.

There's just such a sense of anticipation, as if anything can happen. Perhaps that's what made me kiss my good friend Andrew on the way home from my Christmas Eve birthday meal. By Boxing Day, we were an item – and 20 years on we're still happily married.

This time of year turns me into a kid again. Andrew and I stay at my parents' house the night before and, by 6am, I'm so excited that I get up, grab my stocking and go and sit on their bed! Mum's the same, so we rummage through our stockings before the men have woken up.

Then it's Buck's Fizz and present opening – last year Andrew bought me a bracelet for Christmas, and a KitchenAid blender for my birthday. I'm a keen cook, so it was the perfect gift. Then we usually go to my cousin Gay's house, who hosts dinner. At the end of the meal, the lights are dimmed and in comes the flaming Christmas pudding – followed by my cake and a chorus of *Happy Birthday*. And, every year, I blow the candles out and feel grateful for everything I have.

So, the day really hasn't changed since I was a child. It's still about family, fun, silly games and laughter... just with a bit more Champagne thrown in. And I wouldn't have it any other way.' ➔

‘I was facing Christmas without a job – then came a miracle’

When Miranda Dickinson, 42, from Dudley, was made redundant she thought her career was over, until she received an email that changed everything.

‘Christmas in New York is such a magical time: ice skating in Central Park and twinkling lights on the tree at the Rockefeller Center. I could almost feel the snowflakes on my face...

Only I wasn't there. I'd never even been to New York. I lived in the West Midlands and worked as a copywriter, producing political leaflets for local councillors. I longed to leave but couldn't find anything else. So each night, I'd come home to my flat, switch on my laptop and escape into a story about a girl taking over a New York florist – and writing my own happy ending. I'd fallen in love with the city through old movies. It seemed like such a romantic place.

But then, just a few days before Christmas in 2008, reality came crashing in when I was made redundant. I panicked; how would I pay my rent? I felt utter despair at the rejection, too. I was 35 and my career was over.

When my last day came, I filled up a box and carried it out to my car. Then, as I sat in the front seat wondering what on earth I was going to do next, my phone buzzed with an incoming email and, in a split second, my life changed.

It was from an editor at the publisher HarperCollins. They'd seen part of my book on a website for unpublished authors called Authonomy, and wanted to see the rest of my manuscript!

Glued to my car seat, I googled her – she was real. It was real. It was like some enchanted door had opened and, for the first time in months, I felt hope.

There was one small snag – I hadn't finished the book. So I went to stay with my boyfriend Bob until it was done.

Then came the best phone call of all – the publisher offered me a three-book deal! I was so overwhelmed.

That Christmas, money was tight but I spent the next few months editing while juggling freelance work until my book, *Fairytale of New York*, was ready to be released in time for the festive season.

Launch day came on 12 November, and I begged all my friends and family to buy it – that way I was sure I'd shift a few hundred copies. Later that day, I received a call from the publisher saying it had sold out at Waterstones.

“Which branch?” I asked. She laughed. “Every Waterstones has sold out!”

I was astounded. It turned out that the community on Authonomy had got behind me, recommending it on social media.

That Christmas morning, I woke up thinking: “All across the country there are copies of my book under the tree!” It made me dizzy. A year earlier, I'd been at my lowest point; now I had a bestseller and two in the pipeline.

So that's why this is such a special time of year for me – amazing things just seem to happen. A few years later, Bob and I were icing gingerbread stars on Christmas Eve when I noticed one was missing. The next day, I found it hanging on the tree with the words “Marry Me” iced on to it.

Now, Bob and I are married and have an 18-month-old daughter, Florence. I write full-time but I still haven't made it to New York! However, I'm living proof that miracles don't just happen in films, and that Christmas in Dudley can be just as wonderful.

• *Miranda's latest novel, A Parcel For Anna Browne (Pan Macmillan, £7.99), is out now*



Feature: Andreina Cordani **Styling:** Theoda Solms Iles. **Miranda wears:** Dress, Love Drobe at Simply Be. Wrap cardigan, Long Tail. Earrings, from a selection, Claudia Bradby. Shoes, Lisa Kay



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M&Co



Reveal your party-ready eyes!

Whether you want clearer vision or a more glamorous look, now is the perfect time to try contact lenses

As you ramp up the glitz this Christmas, you might want to leave your glasses at home. Contact lenses are the ideal choice when you're socialising, giving all-round vision while letting you show off your party make-up. They're suitable for all kinds of vision correction, whether you're short- or long-sighted, have an astigmatism, need varifocal lenses or wear glasses for reading and watching TV. In fact, 95% of people who wear glasses can consider contact lenses. You can even get contact lenses that enhance your eyes – in a subtle way by adding definition and shine, or more dramatically by changing the colour.

See the difference

Light and easy to wear, contact lenses can be a fantastic alternative to glasses. A great

fit means that, unlike glasses, you won't worry about losing or breaking them. Once in position, they sit securely on the surface of your eyes and move with them. When properly fitted, they're unlikely to pop out, but if they do move there's no need to miss any of the party action – they'll remain on your eye and blinking a few times will encourage them back into place.

Expert advice

Head to Boots Opticians to give contact lenses a go. We're here to help you find the right lenses for your lifestyle, and ensure you feel comfortable putting them in and taking them out. We'll talk you through any concerns, and answer any questions you might have, big or small. We'll also give you a free trial* so they'll quickly become part of your everyday health and beauty routine.

95%
of glasses
wearers
can consider
contact lenses



Opticians
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[†]Lines are open 8.30am-7pm, Monday to Friday; and 8.45am-5pm, Saturday and Sunday. Calls charged at local rates.

*A trial consists of up to five pairs of daily disposable lenses or a month's supply of selected daily reusable lenses. The trial excludes quarterly replacement, annual replacement, rigid gas-permeable lenses and coloured contact lenses. It also excludes current Boots Opticians contact lens reward scheme customers and contact lenses by post customers.

‘The best thing about the festive season?’ **PANTO!’**

Author and comedian Viv Groskop reveals why panto is the best thing about Christmas (Oh yes it is!)



‘E’very year, I see a pantomime – I just love it. It’s one of those great British Christmas traditions – even when someone like David Hasselhoff is in it. And, believe me, he’s *always* in it. This year he is Captain Hook alongside The Krankies in Glasgow. I’m not making this up: “You would be ‘Hoff’ your head to miss it”, apparently.

Panto is hilarious, magical and life-affirming. Oh yes it is! There’s something very special about pantomime. It’s unlike any other theatrical experience because it is allowed to be deliberately unpolished, ad-lib, old-fashioned and cheesy. In our jaded Netflix world, where we’re always looking for the latest exciting new thing, there’s something wonderful about panto’s refusal to change.

Pantomime is a celebration of end-of-the-pier stereotypes and clichés: the dame, the principal boy, the beautiful princess, the sort of jokes you’d find in a cracker. When you go to panto, you know exactly what you’re going to get.

I first fell in love with panto when I was five and had the role of Widow Twankey in *Aladdin* at my primary school. I got to wear make-up for the first time (including massive rouged cheeks like Aunt Sally’s in *Worzel Gummidge*; see right) and have my hair in rollers (left in, like Hilda Ogden’s in *Coronation Street*). There was something amazing about a hall of people all shouting “He’s behind you!” at the same time. I’ve been a fan ever since.

It’s also one of the only times that, as an audience member, you can be like someone from

what my children would call “the olden days” (they think of this as being circa 1995). You can applaud, boo, hiss, shout out, gasp, groan, weep, laugh. You get to behave like a cross between a three-year-old and Baldrick from *Blackadder*. It’s even appropriate to hate it and wish you were somewhere else. In fact, during the panto experience, this will happen. Stick with it, this is normal. A dance routine will be along soon to get you out of your grump.

What I love most about panto, though, is how random it is, particularly the ones at big theatres, where they pride themselves on assembling the most unlikely cast ever: a reality TV celebrity, a star from the 1980s and someone from local radio. One of the best I ever saw was *Snow White* at Richmond Theatre

with Jane Asher as the wicked queen, and comedian Tim Vine as the court jester. Jane wafted about being Jane (she was excellent at this), and Tim would come on and tell 3,000 jokes in 10 minutes. Then,

completely unexplained, there was a dance section with zombies to Michael Jackson’s *Thriller*. Genius!

Last year, in an appalling break with tradition – don’t worry, it’ll never happen again – we decided to go upmarket and I took the children (aged four, eight and 10) to *Edward Scissorhands* at Sadler’s Wells. It was beautiful and flawless – but far too tasteful. It barely felt like Christmas.

This year, thank goodness, Matthew Kelly, Hayley Mills and CBBC’s Chris Jarvis are in *Cinderella* near me (see what I mean about the cast?). So I’ll be back in the front row with a large packet of Maltesers, screaming “He’s behind you” until I’m sick.’

‘Panto is hilarious, magical and life-affirming’





Meet the Christmas *angels*

These four women spread festive cheer to those who need it most in communities, locally and around the world. We think you'll agree, they're amazing!

'I hope to bring about lasting friendships'



Caroline Billington, 54, is a freelance finance director and lives with her partner Nick, 63, in Newbury, Berkshire.

'Some may find it strange, but I'm not a fan of Christmas. To me, it's just another day, which is why, in 2007, I volunteered to drive a community bus, ferrying elderly people to and from a church Christmas lunch. Afterwards, they were buzzing and chatting about how they were going to meet up throughout the year. I realised that

one event had changed their lives; it still makes me emotional to think about it.

After volunteering for the next few years, in 2011, I organised a lunch myself. I linked up with three other events, branding it Community Christmas and, as part of that, I decided to help flag up other things that were happening around the country. It upset me that these events were taking place yet so few people knew about them.

This year, I have a series of three lunches running for older people and I'll oversee them all and organise one myself. Some of our guests hear about

‘We create a magical Christmas morning’

Denise Davis-Boreham, 49, lives in Bedford with her two children.

For many people, waking up on Christmas morning can be a lonely experience. My children, Abigail, now 24, and Jake, 21, were lucky, and it was always a magical time in our house, but others aren't so fortunate.

As chief executive of Make A Difference (a community interest company that works with young people), I realised that those who'd stayed in night shelters on Christmas Eve had to leave in the morning with nowhere to go. So, eight years ago, I arranged a Christmas breakfast at our local YMCA. It was a great success. There were around 20 people, from all walks of life, and they were all so grateful. Then, after moving into our own building five years ago, we expanded the yearly event to include anyone who wanted to come.

So now each year we have a real mix from struggling families to those who are homeless and others who just don't want to spend Christmas morning alone. Last year, we had two men who'd recently been released from prison and were sleeping in a freezing old boat in a nearby park.



Every Christmas, Denise (left and above, centre) and her band of volunteers host a breakfast for the homeless

‘We try to make Christmas magical; anyone can find themselves homeless’

Each year, we start planning in November; sourcing volunteers, spreading the word and getting financial support from local businesses. Then, on Christmas Eve, we buy food for around 50 people and wrap little gifts such as gloves, socks or toiletries. We want everything to be as fresh as possible, so we find ourselves in the midst of the last-minute shopping frenzy buying 12 dozen eggs, 10 packets of bacon and 100 sausages.

Along with my kids, and around 25 volunteers, I arrive at 7.30am

on Christmas Day to get things ready. Afterwards, we have our own celebrations then go to a friend's house for lunch so I don't have to cook!

Anyone can find themselves homeless, sometimes following a divorce or after falling out with their families, and we try to make the breakfast as magical as possible. We have crafts available for the kids, Christmas music and festive films playing. Last year, a single mum and her kids came along and she told me how she'd fallen on hard times. Then, to my delight, she got in touch in the summer to say she'd found a job and was doing well, adding that she'd never forgotten our kindness on Christmas morning and what a boost that had been.'

• For more information, visit mad-uk.org

us through word of mouth or from local advertising, others are referred by social services. I start planning in September but I raise funds for it all year round. The lunch costs around £15 per person, including a goody bag and, as well as gatherings, our volunteers also deliver lunches to people's homes.

I sort out the volunteers and guests and look after transport, goody bags

‘I've found a better, more rewarding way to spend Christmas Day’

and catering issues. The volunteers are mainly local people, many of whom would otherwise be alone themselves.

On Christmas Eve, we decorate the hall, then, on the day itself, my partner Nick and I swap gifts before I head off to greet the guests at 11am. Nick helps collect people and bring them to the lunch.

We organise activities, such as quizzes and carol singing, and provide a traditional Christmas dinner. And there's a real festive buzz about it as people sit chatting while the smell of turkey and potatoes fills the room.

My favourite memory is when two elderly men recognised each other at

the door. They'd worked together 20 years before and stayed with each other all day, swapping numbers at the end. That's always been my aim – to create friendships that last all year round. And nothing makes me happier than seeing people who were strangers vowing to stay in touch.

Afterwards, Nick and I visit my mum and brother but by 10.30pm, I'm exhausted. People often say, "I can't believe you give up your Christmas Day," but actually, I've found a better, more rewarding way to spend it.'

• Visit communitychristmas.org.uk or beafriendtoday.org.uk ➔

'I'm fulfilling my dad's wishes'

Vashti Seth, 38, lives in Bristol with her husband Stuart, 40, and children Isla, five, and Jago, two.

Clutching the envelope of cash, I remember feeling hurt and bewildered. It was 2006, and my dad John had just died of lung cancer at 57. While my six siblings had been left personal items in his will, such as his watch and ring, I'd been given £2,000 with the instructions to "Do something good with it". I didn't have a clue what he meant. I was 28, single and had been working in the film industry until I left to look after Dad.

Lost in my grief, I went to India. While there, I visited a Tibetan refugee called Deki Dolkha, now 16, who Dad had sponsored since she was four. It upset me to see how dire her future prospects were. She was facing a life of menial work.

Back in the UK, I wanted to help Deki and others who needed a way out of the poverty trap. Dad had been charitable, and I, too, felt strongly about helping

others. I liked the idea of microloans, where people lend entrepreneurs small amounts of money, which are then repaid within a set time frame.

I spent my dad's inheritance visiting Nepal to find a partner company that would find entrepreneurs, pass on the money and provide training. An £8,000 grant from my old university helped set up the website for the charity we named Deki, to honour the teenager who had inspired us.

The next year, we gave our first loan to a woman in Nepal who needed £200 for food and medication for her sickly cow. As a result, the cow recovered, had a calf and the woman was able to sell the milk they produced. We were thrilled.

The charity has now also moved into Africa, and has given loans for everything from setting up a market

'The charity has changed the lives of over 20,000 people'



Vashti (front, centre) used her inheritance to help entrepreneurs in Nepal and Africa

stall to buying a sewing machine. We have lent over £500,000 and changed the lives of more than 20,000 people.

I'll spend Christmas with my family, where the kids will find Deki vouchers in their stockings. They can go online and choose who to lend money to. I've had thank you letters from people saying they can now afford to send their children to school or even buy soap.

When Dad first left me the money, I was upset that he didn't leave me a personal keepsake, but now I realise he must have seen the potential in me to do "something good". I hope he'd be proud.'

• For more information, visit deki.org.uk

'We never forget it's tough for the families'

Carole Young, 70, and her husband Dave, 72, live in Luton.

Washing and ironing isn't the most glamorous way to spend Christmas Day, but that's what Dave and I will be doing on 25 December.

It all started 15 years ago, when I heard that vandals had smashed

the windows in the new children's building at a nearby hospice. I held a raffle to raise funds for them and, when I delivered the cheque to Keech Hospice Care, I was struck by what an amazing place it was. Before long, I was volunteering at the hospice and fundraising, such as running a market stall. I've since raised over £300,000.

With no children of our own, Dave and I used to spend Christmas Day with relatives, but that year we turned up at Keech at 9am and spent the day helping out. Families can enjoy a traditional dinner, but for many, it's a sad day, so to be able to provide tea and a chat makes a real difference.

Now, every day in December, we help man Keech's fundraising float. It's in the shape of Santa's train and is pulled by a car to collect money for the hospice. On Christmas Day itself, we'll work, dressed in our Christmas hats, stopping only for some soup in

the canteen. Sometimes people thank us, but we feel honoured to have helped.

We try to make the day special, but we're mindful that for some families it's a tough time. I'll never forget three girls and their father leaving their dying mother for a few minutes to eat a Christmas dinner in the canteen. They were trying so hard to be brave, it broke my heart.

In general though, Keech isn't a sad place and the staff try hard to create magical moments for people. One poorly little boy was desperate to see a penguin so they arranged for Whipsnade Zoo to bring one to him.

It's memories like this that make me determined to help Keech every day. And if I can help people on Christmas Day, too, then that's even better.'

• Keech Hospice Care provides free, specialist care for adults and children with life-limiting conditions, as well as vital support for their family and friends. Visit keech.org.uk



Carole spends her Christmas helping out at a local hospice

A woman with brown hair, smiling broadly, stands in the center of an open white doorway. She is wearing a long, sleeveless, floor-length gown covered in shimmering silver sequins. Her hands are on her hips. The background is a deep red curtain, and the floor is a matching red carpet. The text 'THIS CHRISTMAS' is written in a small, white, serif font above the word 'OWN', and 'OWN IT' is written in a large, white, serif font across the middle of the image.

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'The season sparked our business ideas'

As we stock up on Christmas cards, decorations and festive food, we meet the women who help us to achieve those special seasonal touches

'I love bringing the outside in'

Elaine Parkinson, 45, makes Christmas wreaths from her home near Chorley, Lancashire. She's married to Stephen, 45, and they have three children.

Humming a carol as I sit at my kitchen table with moss and pine cones sprawled all around, it's a chaotic scene but one that I wouldn't change for the world.

I'd worked in insurance for 17 years but gave up office life in 2007 to move to my husband Stephen's family farm, where my seven-year-old daughter Felicity loved picking wild flowers for me. It was so sweet, and I began to see nature through her eyes, marvelling at its beauty.

I started looking for a job I could fit around the kids, something to make use of the land, and came across an organisation called Flowers from the Farm. It only cost £70 to join and

another £70 to go along to a workshop, so in March 2013, I decided to find out more. I was really inspired by the flower arranging demonstrations, and by all the possibilities of "growing your own".

Back at home, we dug some large flower beds and planted 1,200 daffodil bulbs, 500 tulips and summer annuals such as cornflowers; it cost £300 from my savings. I called the fledgling business Felicity Farm Flowers, which my daughter loved.

Next, I signed up for a part-time year-long City & Guilds course in floristry at the local agricultural college in Myerscough, where I went every Wednesday. It cost £800, plus £30 a week for the flowers. The following spring, I was thrilled when the daffodils sprung up beautifully and I sold them to friends and family for £3 a bunch. When the summer flowers bloomed, I sold those, too. It seemed there was something in this, so last November, I took my training more seriously and embarked on

a career-change course at the Tallulah Rose Flower School in Bath. It cost £3,950, but I saw it as an investment in my future, and Stephen backed me.

By now, word had spread about the lovely local flowers coming from the

farm – and people began asking if I could make Christmas wreaths.

Foraging for pine cones in the local woods and using some big seed heads from the garden, I started my designs on rings made of spruce and covered with moss. I added berries and rose hips and wired them up using twigs and sticks.

Wreath making is similar to flower arranging in that you're trying to create something beautiful and interesting with texture, shape, colour and form.

'Hanging a wreath is one of the first signs Christmas is coming'

But collecting branches and twigs is quite different from dealing with delicate flowers. It's rougher on your hands!

Still, I was thrilled by their wild, rustic look and was excited when I sold 20 of them for £25, even selling one to a local pub where it sat in the window.

This year, I set myself up as a sole trader and I'm going wilder and more bespoke, selling wreaths as well as festive bouquets and candle arrangements at Christmas markets and through my Facebook page.

When it's cold and dark outside, there's nothing better than bringing the beauty of nature home for everyone to admire. And hanging a wreath on the door is one of the first signs that Christmas is coming.'

• felicityfarmflowers.com





Elaine's tip
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‘We love seeing how people react to our cards’

When Dipa Shah, 31, from Croydon, Surrey, discovered a way to make intricate pop-up cards, it was the start of a whole new business.

On holiday in Thailand, I first came across Kirigami cards. I came back raving about these detailed pop-up cards to my older sister Kripa, who, like me, had always loved making things. That was seven years ago and, although I thought they were stunning, I never imagined that I would make a living creating and selling them!

But when, after working in IT in Australia for a few years, I found myself home again without a job last year, my thoughts turned back to the cards. I asked Kripa what she thought about setting up a business to sell them. She was keen to move on from her teaching job, so we decided to try out the cards.

After buying a blade cutter and a drawing software program (£500), we started off modifying designs, like a pop-up birthday gift, and spent hours making them at our kitchen table. We sold the cards at markets and people marvelled at the way they’d open up with a surprise hidden inside.

Buoyed up by the positive response, we then did a business plan and got friends and family to pick holes in it, so that we knew it would work.

Last September, Kripa, 41, took the plunge and left her job, and we put in £4,000 each from our savings to start the card business for real. We bought materials, sorted transport and hired



stalls at markets (big Christmas shows can charge £300 per square metre).

Determined to make this work, we decided to let out the flat that we both shared and move, with our husbands Sen and David, back into our parents’ house. Luckily, it was big enough and Mum and Dad are supportive, though it was a big sacrifice for everyone.

We set up shop in my parents’ box room, cutting and sticking together the cards and selling them for £3 or £4 each. We churned out around 2,000 cards with designs such as a London skyline with Santa flying across. It was a big learning curve as we realised how much work you needed to put into Christmas, our biggest selling time. It paid off, though – we made £50,000 of sales over the festive selling period!

In February, we went back to South East Asia to outsource the production

so we could focus on planning, selling and coming up with ideas. We found three factories, with high safety standards and fair wages, to make 14,000 cards. By May this year we were able to draw

‘A new design this year features a scene from *The Nutcracker*’

a salary. At £700 a month each, it’s not huge, but it’s so satisfying to know it’s through our own hard work.

We’re still living with our parents, and by the time we all sit down together on Christmas Day, we’ll have been out on the road for six weeks, selling at markets up and down the country.

We’ve come up with new festive designs, including a card that opens up to reveal a theatre with *The Nutcracker* being performed on stage. We love seeing people react to the beauty and fun of our cards.

As sisters, it helps that we can be totally honest with each other, and we divide tasks according to our strengths. I’m strategy and IT, Kripa’s great at design. Christmas is all about family, so it makes perfect sense for us to own our festive business together!’

• cardology.co.uk





Kitchen table talent

'I feel like Santa's little helper!'

Sue Lang, 50, from Marston Moretaine in Bedfordshire, owns the Black Cat Farm Shop.

'S'itting in my farm shop, I feel just like Santa's little helper as I play my part in getting my customers' Christmas food shopping sorted. I love food and used to enjoy making jam and chutneys with my mum and Nanna; one of my earliest memories is of standing on a stool, apron on, putting the filling into jam tarts.

But although I went to catering college, when I met my husband Danny, I decided anti-social restaurant hours weren't going to work with married life, so I got a job in sales support for a large brewery. I kept up my love of cookery, however, dabbling in preserve making and bee-keeping, and was never happier



than when I was hosting Christmas lunch, putting on the full works.

In 2009, I was made redundant after 19 years and decided to turn my preserve making into a full-time business. Danny backed me all the way. Using £500 from my redundancy package, I invested in jars and stainless steel preserving pans. A Food Hygiene certificate cost just £30 and most of the fruit I used was foraged or given to me. I cooked up my jams and preserves in



my kitchen. I set up a website through an online template, and signed up to a site called BigBarn, which advertises local food businesses and farmers' markets.

Before long, I was busy going to local markets, and loved the Christmas fairs where I sold my own mincemeat, cranberry relish and jam for £3 and Christmas puddings from £3.50.

It was sociable, too; I became friendly with Valerie and Mark, a couple who sold fruit and veg. We even worked together on a pop-up shop, so last year when they said they were retiring and wanted to sell their farm shop – a log cabin in the grounds of a garden centre – it felt right that I buy the business from them, using my redundancy money. I'd just recovered from breast cancer and I had a real "seize the day!" feeling.

Taking over Black Cat Farm Shop last October was a challenge, but I enjoyed getting to know the suppliers – bakers, cheesemakers, butchers, crafters – as well as making my own

'Creating something special for Christmas is such a pleasure'

products. As I got ready for that first Christmas, stringing up fairy lights, I felt so excited. It was such a busy time as we boxed up scores of phone and email orders, so that our customers could get the best local turkeys, sprouts, carrots and parsnips without queuing for hours. I included a little jar of jam in every order.

This Christmas will be even bigger, and I'm thinking of expanding so that I can make my products on site. Food is at the heart of Christmas Day and it gives me so much pleasure knowing I've helped create something special.'

• blackcatfarmshop.co.uk



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Our favourite traditions



We all have our own special Christmas rituals that make us feel festive at this time of year. Here, three authors reveal theirs



For Tammy Cohen, the start of the festive season means packing up the car and heading North

The best way to sum up the start of Christmas for my family isn't mince pies by the fire or decorating the tree. No, it's the sight of the M1 rushing past our car window or, more often, remaining completely still, as we sit in a jam along with 99.9% of the British driving population.

"Aaah..." my partner Michael will say, as we resignedly switch off the engine in the middle lane somewhere near Milton Keynes and break into the stash of chocolate intended for my nephews' stockings, "...now it feels like Christmas."

Mum's disability has meant that, for the past 10 years, Christmas is spent near her. That means packing up kids, dog, gifts, novelty table decorations, the obligatory panettone our neighbour gives us every year and we can't bear to leave behind (even though no one ever eats it), and heading from London to Liverpool where Mum lives with my sister.

As the years have gone on, the cars have changed and so have the things we've stuffed into them. Our late, much-missed Volvo Estate

had a boot the size of a small country, which meant that even suspiciously bike-shaped presents could remain hidden until the big day. For a couple of lean years, after the Volvo gave up the ghost, all five of us plus one small brown rescue dog squashed into a VW Golf and presents for the kids – Otis, now 23, Jake, 20, and Billie, 18 – were selected purely on the basis of how much space they took up. iPod Shuffle: good. Cash: excellent. Snowboard: no chance! We became ingenious at forward planning, ordering online gifts and booze that were delivered direct up North, so our first evening on arrival was always spent surrounded by cardboard boxes, acres of bubble wrap and rapidly emptying bottles.

These days it's sometimes Otis who drives, with me fighting back the urge to ask "have you checked the rear view mirror?" every time he changes lane (because that's not irritating at all). The little brown rescue dog has been replaced by a slightly

larger rescue dog and, every year, we dutifully pack the same novelty light-up doggy antlers that her predecessor used to wear on Christmas Day and that are reassuringly familiar.

Some journeys have passed into family mythology: the Christmas it snowed and the car window jammed after paying the toll on the M6, leaving

all passengers to travel the rest of the journey in blizzard conditions inside the car; and the Christmas the dog managed to

break into the boot and eat a tube of Smarties, with predictable results.

I know there'll come a time when we no longer make the annual festive trip. My mum won't always be around and, sooner or later, the kids will go their own way and have their own families. But, just for now, the sight of the sign for the turn-off for the M62 gives me a warm glow. Christmas isn't about things – it's about feelings and about family. Yes, and sometimes about service station loo stops, too.'

• Tammy's book, *Dying for Christmas* (Black Swan, £6.99), is out now

'Christmas isn't about things – it's about family'





Fiona Gibson reveals why she's strictly old school when it comes to Christmas

While I'd like to think I'm a modern woman – you know, constantly checking Facebook, buying groceries online and prodding at my iPhone like a teenager – at Christmas, I'm firmly ensconced in the past. It's as if the internet never happened.

There's something deeply traditional about this time of year. Most of us cherish memories of our own childhood

Christmases, and it feels reassuring to do things the old-fashioned way. That's why I'll never send e-cards. While I know it's the sensible option – saving time, money and trees – Christmas wouldn't feel right without spending ages shopping for cards, and setting aside an evening with a glass of Prosecco to write them. Although I'd never include one of those terrible, boastful round-robin letters ("Harry's marrow scooped the top prize this year!"), I do tend to scribble a few lines to far-flung friends. Yes, it takes time and effort, but proper cards, sent in the old-fashioned post, keep connections alive.

As for Christmas shopping, I'm not a masochist. I buy the big, bulky presents

online – who wants lacerated hands from lugging copious carrier bags around town? However, a trip to the "real" shops to choose stocking presents and soak up the lovely, tinselly atmosphere is still a crucial ingredient of the season.

With sweet treats, there's nothing like a freshly baked mince pie to transport me instantly back in time. Every year when I was growing up, my much adored Grandma May would make a huge batch. Oozy, home-made mincemeat encased in crumbly, icing sugar-dusted pastry:

no wonder my heart soared whenever she took the lid off the tin. While pastry isn't my forte – and I'm no more likely to make mincemeat than repoint our house – it feels important to continue the tradition for my kids, twins Sam and Dexter, both 18, and Erin, 15. Even my substandard efforts are superior to shop-bought pies when they're warm from the oven.

And the big day itself? While

'I'll never send e-cards; cards sent in the post keep connections alive'

my husband Jimmy takes charge of proceedings, I am allowed to contribute the occasional side dish – bread sauce, or a special way with sprouts – and out come my cookbooks. At Christmas, I want to leaf through their pages; I wouldn't dream of googling a recipe.

I inherited Grandma May's cookbooks, and, when Mum moved into a care home last year, I also became custodian of her beloved tree baubles. They're terribly fragile, made from painted glass, and have somehow remained intact since she first set up home with my dad. As a child of the 1960s, I remember my delight on peeling off their tissue paper wrappings as we decorated the tree.

This year, they'll be hanging on our Christmas tree in our Glasgow home, and Phil Spector's Christmas album will be playing. Never mind a stylish, contemporary Christmas. I'll be swigging Tia Maria and partying like it's 1969.'

• *Fiona's new novel, The Woman who Upped and Left (Avon, £7.99), is out 25 February 2016* ➔





In our experience



Adele Parks explains why there's something special about the empty boxes she exchanges with her husband

Present giving. It's a minefield, isn't it? I met my husband Jim three weeks before Christmas, which caused me a great deal of stress. I definitely wanted to buy him a gift, but what could I buy such a new boyfriend that was impressive and notable enough to say, "You are special; I just have a feeling about this," but at the same time didn't leave me utterly exposed if he was just not that into me?

In the end, I bought a collection of small gifts – chocolate, books, CDs (back in the day!) – and wrapped them in a box I'd covered with sparkly ribbons. And I mean absolutely covered. I put about 40 bows on the box; haphazard, colourful ribbons fluttered, curled and danced alongside a sparkler that I'd attached with a few of those unfurling blowers. You get the picture.

Jim was a bit taken aback, but I explained that I wanted to present him with something that he was already

giving to me in spades: fun. Lots and lots of fun.

The thing is, I've never bettered that gift or, more accurately, the thought behind the gift. Over the years, I've rolled through the various options, searching for that special something for Jim: clothes (fine, but a bit yawn), Red Letter Days (not

always experienced; too busy!), tools (low point) and aftershave (he didn't even need a new bottle).

None of these expressed how much I love him.

Nothing can. These gifts didn't excite me when purchasing them nor, I suspected, did they excite him when he received them. Once I tried the "splash out" gift. I bought an expensive Gucci watch; he loved it but felt guilty because his present to me wasn't of equal value. I didn't care, I always loved the pretty, silky, glittery things he delivered (look, I'm just easier to buy for), but it was all he talked about over the Brussels sprouts!

Picking Jim's gift fast became the most stressful thing about Christmas. I spent hours trudging around shops looking for inspiration but finding slippers. I felt doomed, miserable.

Then, one October, some years ago, Jim tentatively suggested we stopped swapping presents. And this was the best gift he

could ever have given me. Because it's not like we go short of gifts – we surprise each other all year round – it just took the pressure off the big day.

Now don't get me wrong: I'm definitely a "more is more" person when it comes to Christmas. We're a family that buys their Christmas tree from a farm that has genuine reindeer, and we make industrial quantities

of mince pies and mulled wine. We dress the tree, glass in hand, while Bing Crosby is dreaming of a white Christmas. We post endless cards, wrap gifts and send them all

over the world. We throw a party; everyone drinks too much.

All three generations wear matching Christmas jumpers when we go to the panto, where we yell "He's behind you" with gusto. We leave Santa a mince pie and glass of port in exchange for a magic trail throughout the house. My son Conrad is 14 and stopped believing when he was six, and glitter is hell to Hoover, but you know, it is Christmas. It's supposed to be fun!

And it is. Especially now our peculiar tradition is that we swap an empty box at Christmas time. Covered in bows. Absolutely covered!

• Adele's new book, *If You Go Away* (Headline, £7.99), is out 19 November



'The thing is, I've never bettered the thought behind that first gift'



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‘Christmas won’t always be sad, it will just be different’



As a child, Tara Lal loved Christmas, but a series of devastating losses shattered her family and made it the hardest time of the year. Here, she talks about her emotional journey and how she made peace with grief

We were a family of five growing up in north London in the 1970s. Like any kid, I loved Christmas. One of my favourite rituals was buying and decorating the tree with my mum, big brother Adam and sister Jo. We’d get one from the corner shop, and the four of us would carry it ceremoniously along our road before manoeuvring it through the front door. We’d then wedge it precariously in a plastic bucket with bricks from our

garden. Without fail, it would topple over, ridding itself of several thousand pine needles. It always ended up somewhat wonky, much like our family.

Mum would retrieve the same old box of Christmas decorations from our attic for their annual excursion to our living room. We all decorated the tree together,

bar my dad Shev, who remained in his customary position sunk deep in his armchair, nose in book, oblivious to the excitement around him.

Typically, my mum Bridget had made our Christmas stockings from soft felt. On Christmas Eve, us siblings would drag our mattresses on to my sister’s bedroom floor so we could

all sleep together, carefully laying out our stockings.

In our house, Father Christmas came in the form of Mum.

Statuesque, with blonde curly hair and

blue eyes, she was the hard-working backbone of our family. This made it all the more funny when, one Christmas, she trod all over us while stealthily filling our stockings, having had a few too many drinks. We all found this hilarious, despite the secret being out.

The part I loved most was waking to feel the weight of my newly filled stocking on my feet. We’d all climb into Mum and Dad’s bed, the five of us

‘Father Christmas came in the form of Mum – blonde and blue eyed’



squished together under one duvet, surrounded by wrapping paper.

CHANGING TIMES

All that changed in May 1984, when I was 13. Mum had been diagnosed with breast cancer when I was eight. She fought to stay alive for five years, enduring a mastectomy and chemotherapy, but eventually, at 51, she died and Christmas was never the same again.

The first one after her death passed in a blur. We went up to my aunt and uncle's, and I can see from the photos how grey we all looked. We were smiling but it was a mask.

In fact, our family disintegrated. Dad, who I've since learned was plagued by depression, was admitted to a psychiatric hospital, where he remained for the best part of a year. My sister spent time with her boyfriend and his family. None of us talked about our sadness, but Adam and I cared for each other. He grieved silently while I sheltered under my big brother's wing. It was as if we each held on to a cord that connected us and prevented us floating alone.

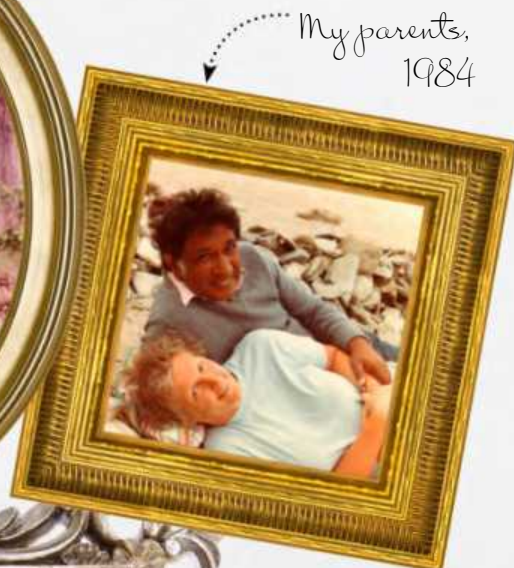
Adam was beautiful; tall and athletic with silky dark hair. He had a quirky sense of humour, and while he was supremely intelligent, he remained humble, with a deep concern for social justice. He cared for people, especially those who seemed excluded. Most of all, he cared for me.

When he went to Oxford University, I worried. I knew he wasn't happy and I tried to persuade him to leave, but he felt a huge weight of expectation that he should fulfil our parents' dreams. I could feel my vibrant, compassionate brother slipping from me, but I never expected him to take his own life. But, four years after our mother's death, in November 1988, I lost him. He had just turned 20.

His suicide crushed me. At 17, what was left of my fragile world shattered



1979



My parents,
1984



Me and
Adam, 1984



Adam,
1988

'None of us talked about our sadness, but Adam and I cared for each other'

in an instant. Christmas came only weeks later. It was horrific. On Christmas Eve, I went to the same pub that Adam and I used to go to together. The moment I walked through the door, the smiles and the merriness strangled me. I ran out on to Hampstead Heath into the darkness, fell on to my knees in the grass and I screamed. Christmas Day came and I barely functioned. We went to a neighbour's house but I felt nothing bar a crushing, suffocating sadness.

My sister, my father and I fragmented in our grief. My father left London, going to live alone with his pain in

Norfolk. My sister moved to America with her then boyfriend.

SOLACE OVERSEAS

For a long time, Christmas only reminded me of what I'd lost. It didn't matter what I did, I was always sad. Then, in 1995, seven years after my brother's death, I went travelling, landing in Sydney. I fell in love, not only with a man, but also with Australia. What had started as a three-month working holiday, turned into 20 years. I became a firefighter, working on Christmas Day, which helped. Our helmets were replaced by reindeer antlers and a seat in the ➔



Personal story



Me as a trainee firefighter, 2005

truck was reserved for Santa, who was invariably hungover but stoically performed his duties for the local homeless community.

On the other side of the world, I built a new home. Eventually, in 2008, I had the Christmas I'd always wanted when my sister and her family came for the holidays. We created a wonderfully ramshackle celebration, full of children, food, wine and fun, and we laughed our way through the day. Unfortunately, our

father couldn't be with us; he was in his late seventies and the trip to Australia was too long. But we spoke on the phone and felt connected again as a family.

As I watched my young niece Marli and nephew Asa climb into bed with my sister and excitedly rip open their gifts, just as we had done in the past, I was struck by a thought. Asa means healer in Hebrew and, scooping him in my arms, I felt that he was indeed a healer, for me and our family. I felt a love and bond with him that was beyond words. I felt our mother looking down on us smiling.'

• Tara's book, *Standing On My Brother's Shoulders: Making Peace with Grief and Suicide* (Watkins, £8.99), is out now



With Dad, sister Jo and her children, 2014

The things I know about coping with loss at Christmas

- 1 There are no rules for grief. What you feel and what you need change from minute to minute, so keep plans flexible.
- 2 Christmas merriment amplifies grief. The feelings of loss will be even more intense. Knowing this will help you prepare.
- 3 Take good care of your mental, physical and spiritual self. Go easy on the alcohol, eat nutritious food, exercise, write a letter to your loved one or write in a journal. It all helps.
- 4 Don't try to be 'happy' if you don't feel it. Allow yourself time to grieve and let yourself feel whatever comes, but give this experience a defined time frame

(less than 30 minutes) and follow it directly with something that gives you lots of pleasure.

- 5 Trying to spend Christmas Day in the same way you always did only serves to remind you of your loss. Think about volunteering for a charity. Helping others refocuses your attention and gives you a sense of purpose.
- 6 Set aside some time for a short ceremony to acknowledge your loved one and give your grief a space.
- 7 Know that what you feel will pass and you will feel better again. Christmas won't always be sad. It will just be different.



For help coping with grief, contact winstonswish.org.uk (for bereaved children) or cruse.org.uk (for anyone dealing with bereavement)

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*Source: A survey of dental hygienists in the UK, Eaton et al. (2012)



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Beauty for grown-ups

1

Pamper your décolletage

What's the first thing you do every morning? Walk chest first into a hot shower? If yes, it's time to turn down the temperature, walk in backwards and master some other clever moves.

The skin on your neck and chest is, along with your eyelids, the thinnest of all. However, when you're applying body lotion, it often fails to make it to the top of the neck, while face cream doesn't stray beyond the jaw. Poor décolletage! Treat this area for a week and there'll be a visible difference, I promise.

- First, switch to a gentle shower gel.
- Exfoliate once a week in the shower using a very gentle facial exfoliator.
- Moisturise day and night, ideally using facial creams. Look for ingredients such as AHAs, co-enzyme Q10 and retinol, which give skin an anti-ageing boost. For added benefits, layer a serum underneath.
- Use a hydrating face mask once or twice a week all over your neck down to, and including, your bust leaving it on overnight (avoid your nipples).
- Keep some body lotion in your handbag and apply to your neck and chest once or twice throughout the day.

Décolletage best buys

The Body Shop Shea Shower Cream, £4 (above, left). **Pai Kukui & Jojoba Bead Skin Brightening Exfoliator**, £24. **L'Oréal Revita Lift Laser Renew Super Serum**, £24.99 (left). **This Works No Wrinkles Time Dose Mask**, £36



My 4 must-dos for a glamorous party season

Our beauty expert Kazia Pelka gives you the essential steps for looking flawless this festive season

2

Give yourself a facial massage

At this time of year, the effect of late nights and too much alcohol can lead to a sluggish system. This makes itself obvious in the face, particularly around the jawline, which can look heavier than usual. But you can beat the bloat with a facial massage ensuring you look your very best in all those party pics! The purpose is to encourage the movement of fluid out of the face toward the lymph nodes, which will also help to clear congestion and boost immunity. What are you waiting for?



Facial massage best buys

Sweet Almond Oil, from £3, nationwide.
Superfacialist Rose Miracle Makeover Facial Oil, £14.99, Boots. **Kiehl's Midnight Recovery Concentrate**, £36 (left).



● Put your fingertips on your collarbone, with your ring fingers on the raised parts near the centre. Move your fingers upward until they find the hollows above the bone. Gently massage the skin in outward circles, adding small amounts of pressure.



● Massage your chin gently, using the soft pads of your fingertips in circular motions from the middle outwards. Move your palms together so that your index fingers are now below the jaw in a 'V' with your middle fingers above it.



● Slowly move your hands toward your ears. Use your index fingers to massage the hollow behind your earlobes in a circular motion. Bring your fingertips slowly down your neck to the collarbone where you started. Repeat the steps a few times.

Create beautiful smoky eyes



It's time to master the smoky eye – this season's shades are gold and plum.

- Sweep a light golden shadow over the lid and into the socket line. Apply a plum shade to the outer half of the lid, into and just above the socket and blend. Take the plum underneath the eye, along the outer third only, and smudge lightly.
- Apply a warm ivory shade to highlight the brow bone and also along the inner corner of the lid to open up the eye.
- Use eyeliner across the upper lid and a little way below the eye. Black will look okay, but I'd recommend a dark plum as it'll make the whites of your eyes look whiter!



Smoky eyes best buys

Clockwise from top: **Max Factor Smokey Eye Drama Kit in Lavish Onyx**, £8.99, Boots. **Illamasqua Matt Powder Eye Shadow in Livid (purple) or Forgiveness (rich chocolate plum)**, £16.50 each. **Delilah Gel Eye Liner in Plum**, £22.

4

Don't forget to perfect your pout

I really like a nude lip with a plummy eye but, if you want a dramatic splash of lip colour, consider a deep berry shade rather than the obvious Christmas red – it's on-trend and sophisticated. For a long-lasting lip:

- Line and fill with lip pencil to match your lipstick. Keep the pressure light otherwise the deep colour will look hard.
- Apply lipstick, blot with one ply of a tissue and repeat. For staying power, use a cream lipstick and add a touch of gloss either side of the Cupid's bow and at the centre of your lower lip to add fullness.

For where to buy, see page 193



Perfect pout best buys

Delilah Colour Intense Cream Lipstick in Vintage, £24 (above). **Maybelline Superstay 14hr Lipstick in Always Plum**, £6.99, Boots. **Rimmel Moisture Renew Lipstick in Sloane's Plum**, £6.49, Boots (far left). **Clarins Joli Rouge in Royal Plum**, £19.50 (below).



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① **Michael Kors 24K Brilliant Gold EDP** (from £39 for 30ml). A citrusy floral that oozes femininity. ② **Michael Kors Rose Radiant Gold EDP** (from £39 for 30ml). If you like a rich, musky floral, this one is for you. ③ **Jimmy Choo Illicit EDP** (from £42 for 40ml). A divine flowery scent with honey notes. ④ **Valentino Donna EDP** (from £41.99 for 30ml, Fragrance Direct). Elegance in a bottle, with notes of rose, bergamot and iris. ⑤ **Jean Paul Gaultier Classique EDT Glam Edition** (£73 for 100ml). This classic fragrance now comes in a limited edition sparkling bottle – who wouldn't love it? ⑥ **Chloé Rose EDT** (£42 for 30ml). This fresh, floral is now available in an EDT. ⑦ **Narciso Rodriguez For Her L'absolu EDP** (from £39 for 30ml). For those who prefer a rich, intense fragrance. Very sensual! ⑧ **Elizabeth Arden Always Red EDT** (£27 for 30ml). Both flowery and oriental in one – a seductive fragrance. ⑨ **Paco Rabanne Olympéa EDP** (from £40 for 30ml). A woody scent with a gorgeous note of vanilla. ⑩ **Marc Jacobs Decadence EDP** (£49 for 30ml). A sensual woody fragrance in a showstopping handbag-shaped bottle. And, to feel even more amazing, finish off with a slick of daring red lippy. ⑪ **No7 Moisture Drench Lipstick Special Edition in Pillarbox** (£9.95, Boots)

INNOVATION THROUGH THE AGES



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Wear a little SPARKLE

Here is our
grown-up guide
to wearing
glitter for the
party season

1 Go for a faux glow

Self-tanning isn't just for summer, it's the perfect remedy to perk up your winter complexion. Add **Tan-Luxe Face Illuminating Self-Tan Serum** (£35, QVC), to your daily moisturiser for a tailor-made glow that will work with your natural skintone for a bespoke subtle colour. You'll be seriously addicted!

2 Illuminate your base

Perfect your glow by switching to a radiance boosting formula. Dull, tired-looking skin is a no-no with party make-up.

We love...

SAVE: Autograph Illuminating Touch Radiance (£12.50, Marks & Spencer).

SPLURGE: YSL Le Teint Touche Éclat (£31.50; right).



3 Eyes with sparkle

A single sweep of shimmering metallic eyeshadow makes for a super-easy party look. 'The trick is to pick a colour that contrasts the shade of your eyes,' says Lancôme head make-up artist Shehla Shaikh. 'Silver works well with brown and hazel eyes, as the cool tone contrasts nicely against their warmth. Copper suits green and blue eyes well, making them pop. And all eye colours suit gold!'



1 Bourjois Little Round Pot in Brun de Folie 07 (£6.99) **2** Bourjois Little Round Pot in Originale 03 (£6.99) **3** Make Up For Ever Artist Shadow in Gold Nugget (£13, exclusive to Debenhams) **4** No7 Limited Edition Stay Perfect Eye Shimmer (£8, Boots) **5** Make Up For Ever Aqua Cream in Silver (£17, exclusive to Debenhams) **6** Clarins Ombre Matte Cream-to-Powder Eye Shadow in 05 Sparkle Grey (£19) **7** Clinique All About Eyeshadow Quad in Morning Java (£29).

4 Draw a line

You can skip eyeshadow altogether and really put on the glitz with a statement top lash line. **Urban Decay Heavy Metal Glitter Eyeliners** in Glamrock or Midnight Cowboy (£14 each) look fabulous on their own. Layer lashings of **Lancôme Hypnôse Stardust Mascara** (£22.50) enriched with gold sparkles on top, so you can flutter some sparkle at fellow party-goers. Or, if you prefer to fake a flutter, you'll love the **Eylure Limited Edition Lashes** in Snow Princess (£6.95). ➔



Beautiful you

5 Learn to strobe

There's a beauty buzz around 'strobing' at the moment. It's a brilliant party make-up technique that accentuates features and creates that healthy, dewy glow we all crave. And it's easy to do. Hurrah! It simply involves highlighting where light naturally hits your face. I find the easiest tool for this is the suit-all **Clinique Chubby Stick Sculpting Highlight in Hefty Highlight** (£19). Just draw on to the top of your cheekbones, the bridge of your nose, the middle of your forehead, centre of your chin and your Cupid's bow and blend. Genius!

We love...

SAVE: **No7 Shimmering Glow Palette** (£12.50). Gold works on every skintone. Use on lids and instead of bronzer for glow. Or to highlight as above.

SPLURGE: **Elizabeth Arden Limited Edition Beautiful Color Highlighter in Gold Illumination** (£29). Three golden shades to use as eyeshadows, or blended together as bronzer.



7 Bronze yourself

For any skin on show, fake a glow with **Xen-Tan Luminous Gold Gel** (£25, Marks & Spencer). This fast-drying formula gives you an instant glow – developing into a beautiful golden shade within three hours with iridescent gold flecks. Alternatively, treat your skin to the **Guinot Huile Mirific Gold Nourishing Dry Oil** (£30.25, Amazon) for a moisture boost with shimmering radiance. You can even use it in your hair! Or spritz on the shimmer with **The Body Shop Powder Limited Edition The Sparkler in Silver Shimmer** or **Golden Glimmer** (£14 each).



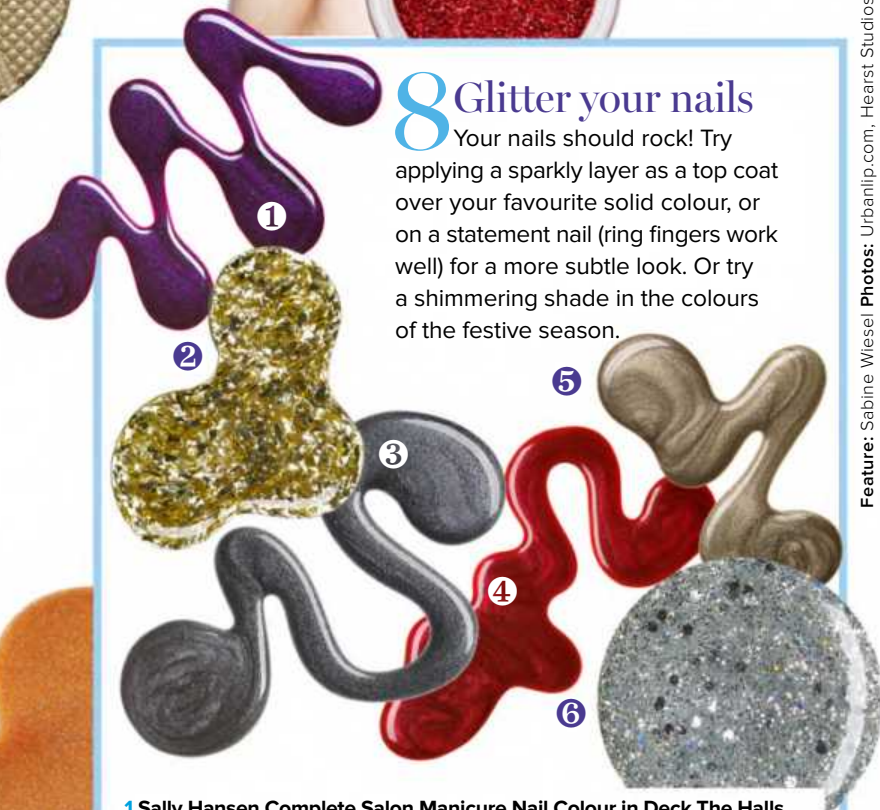
6 Lips that sparkle

Oh, the glamour of a red lip – just imagine the impact of a sparkly red pout! For a fun night out, try **Glitter Lips** (from £12.50, Beauty Boulevard), which gives you a traffic-stopping look for a party. It comes in an array of colours, but we adore Ruby Slippers.



8 Glitter your nails

Your nails should rock! Try applying a sparkly layer as a top coat over your favourite solid colour, or on a statement nail (ring fingers work well) for a more subtle look. Or try a shimmering shade in the colours of the festive season.



1 Sally Hansen Complete Salon Manicure Nail Colour in **Deck The Halls** (£6.99, Boots) **2** Lancôme Vernis in **Love in Golden Topcoat** (£13) **3** OPI Nail Lacquer in **No More Mr. Night Sky** (£12.50) **4** Jessica Effects Limited Edition Polish in **Red Square** (£10.50, Gerrard International) **5** Rimmel London **60 Seconds Super Shine Nail Polish in Darling, You Are Fabulous** (£2.99) **6** No7 Nail Effect Limited Edition Polish in **Starry Sky** (£7, Boots).

GOOD TO GO!

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Keys, purse, mobile, tablet... sometimes it can feel more like you're carrying a suitcase than a handbag. And things aren't much better in the bathroom, with lotions and potions, serums and sprays cluttering every corner of your cupboard. That's why the clever people at Sure have developed Compressed – an antiperspirant in a smaller, smarter can that uses half the amount of gas but has the same amount of protection and, when used in the same way as the big can, will last just as long – or your money back*. Less gas results in a softer spray, but provides the same great antiperspirant protection from dawn until dusk. It's no wonder nine million women have already chosen a Compressed antiperspirant**.

Sure Compressed 125ml will last just as long as the 250ml antiperspirant. In a smaller, smarter can, it's kinder to the environment and fits easily in your handbag or gym bag, for all-day freshness on the go. So start the day feeling clean, protected and confident. Sure – it won't let you down.



HAVE YOU TRIED SURE COMPRESSED YET?

Singer, dancer, choreographer and television personality Kimberly Wyatt knows a bit about keeping fresh on the go! 'With my hectic lifestyle as a busy working mum, I need a reliable antiperspirant to ensure I stay feeling clean, fresh and protected. Sure Compressed releases less gas and has a softer

spray, but provides the same amount of protection and lasts just as long as the big can, giving me confidence whatever I'm up to.'

● Small but strong, Sure Compressed is available nationwide. Chosen by nine million women*, why not discover Compressed antiperspirants for yourself.





Up the WOW factor

We worked our magic on these four readers and showed them how easy it is to look glam this season

Paint the town red



BEFORE

Wendy Abrams, 48, is a housewife from London.

GET THE LOOK

- Have you been invited to a black tie event this Christmas? Make an entrance in this showstopper. The bow at the back makes it a real head-turner.
- The fit-and-flare cut is super-flattering on all body shapes, accentuating the waist and disguising bum, hips, tum and thighs! Add gold or pearl accessories for vintage-inspired 'Hollywood' glam, or team with berry accessories for a modern twist.

Wendy wears:
Dress, £165, Coast.
Bracelet, £15, Next.
Shoes, £45, Very

FINISHING TOUCHES



Pearly **polish** goes well with any outfit. Try Orly Nail Polish in Front Page (£10.50, from mid-November).

We chose a dark scarlet on Wendy's lips. Try Clarins Rouge Eclat **lipstick** In Red Paprika (£19.50). It has a great, long-lasting formula.



How elegant is this classic pearl box **clutch bag** (£28, JD Williams)? It's a perfect finish to Wendy's look.



Have a berry Christmas!



BEFORE

Kristine Fuller, 43, is a housewife from Egham, Surrey.

GET THE LOOK

● From berry to Merlot, rich plummy shades are dominant on the high street right now. And, as Kristine shows, the palette oozes head-turning glamour; perfect for the Christmas party season.

● Team an A-line skirt, like Kristine's fabulous jacquard one, with a tulle under-lining and a pretty top for a winning combination. It's a versatile outfit that you can mix with other separates so you'll get plenty of wear out of it throughout the holidays.

FINISHING TOUCHES

For a bit of extra sparkle, these showstopping **earrings** (£12, Next) work wonderfully.



It had to be plum on Kristine's lips to match her outfit. Try Bourjois Rouge Edition Velvet **lipstick** in Plum Plum Girl (£8.99) with a matte finish.



Shimmering nails are a party season must-have. We love Eve Snow **Nail Polish** in Bang Bang (£14, exclusive to M&S).



Kristine wears:
Top, £119; **skirt**, £129, both Coast.
Bracelet, £12, Jon Richard at Debenhams.
Shoes, £68, Next





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Dress to the max



Louisa Papachristou, 35, lives in London and works in PR.

GET THE LOOK

- Want to be the belle of the ball? Try a floor-length, structured dress like Louisa's, to stand out from the crowd this festive season.
- A dress like this will suit any shape. The flattering, high-waisted cut is great for disguising curves, or a tummy without the need for magic knickers! You'll be able to breathe all evening. Result!

FINISHING TOUCHES



This feather **cape** (£99, Per Una Speciale at Marks & Spencer) is perfect for those who don't like to have their upper arms on show.



Any updo needs a good gloss **serum**. Try Andrew Barton Smooth That Frizz (£5, Asda) on wet hair before styling, and on dry to smooth any strays.



We used L'Oréal Paris La Vie En Rose **lipstick** in Naomi (£6.99, nationwide) on Louisa's lips. It's a lovely vintage pink, perfect for all skintones.

Louisa wears:

Dress, £169, Monsoon. **Earrings**, £15, Mood at Debenhams. **Bracelet**, £18, Jon Richard at Debenhams. **Bag**, £35, Accessorize. **Shoes**, £32, Next





Jump-start the party



BEFORE

Claire Ruston, 55, from Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, is a chaplaincy clerk.

GET THE LOOK

- The fantastic selection of jumpsuits found on the high street right now works for every festive occasion. Just keep it simple for Christmas Day and blinged up for the office party.
- Don't think you can wear a jumpsuit? You can – no matter what your age or shape. They're really youthful and so flattering. Hurrah! V-necks look amazing if you have a large bust, while a loose-fitting version with a tie-waist is fabulous on curvy girls.

FINISHING TOUCHES

A few pumps of Lee Stafford Bleach Blondes Golden Girl (£9.99, Boots) keeps dry hair looking healthier. A fab, non-greasy **oil** for blondes!



Less is more in the lippy department to match Claire's smoky eyes. Yves Saint Laurent limited-edition Rouge Pur Couture Kiss & Love Collection **lipstick** in No70 Le Nu (£26) is ideal.



If there's a chill in the air, this embellished **jacket** (£89, Monsoon) will keep Claire cosy.



Claire wears:

Jumpsuit, £45, Wallis. **Necklace**, £19.99, Monsoon. **Bag**, £55, Coast. **Shoes**, £32, Next

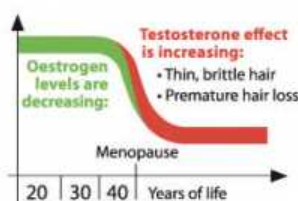


Over one third of women experience hair loss after menopause

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This graph shows how when a woman approaches the menopause, her oestrogen levels decline, and the negative effect of her testosterone rises. This hormonal fluctuation can lead to hair thinning or hair loss. For those women affected, the hair loss can be dramatic.



Plantur 39 shampoo is formulated with a Phyto-Caffeine ingredient that, if used regularly may help reduce the affect of these hormones on the hair roots. Which could help reduce hair thinning or hair loss during and after the menopause.

Plantur 39 is available at Boots, pharmacies and leading supermarkets.

*Source: Nielsen Company Panel, 2014, Germany, per SKU in German drug stores

Spice up your winter wellness!

Cinnamon, cloves, ginger... they're not just for spicing up Christmas – they're also brilliant at knocking out those festive wellbeing niggles and getting you through the big chill!

Feeling moody?

Sip some saffron

Never heard of saffron as a wellbeing remedy? Hey, it was news to us, too! But studies now reveal it's effective in treating mild depression and PMS. Result! Sipping a tea with saffron and other mood soothers could be the perfect way to ease the festive blues. Uber herbalist Tipper Lewis has a tasty chai-inspired winter tea that could help calm you down if it gets too much.

Mood Lifting Tea

• 1tsp green tea leaves, which contain L-theanine to help you find your Zen! • 3-4 strands of saffron to calm the nerves • 3-4 cardamom pods to clear the mind and refocus • A dash of liquorice powder to beat stress and naturally sweeten ✨ Infuse all the ingredients with freshly boiled water in a teapot for 5-10 mins, strain and enjoy. Find saffron and other herbs at nealsyardremedies.com

✨ Like long-term gains? Try 30mg saffron capsules a day • Try

Viridian Saffron Extract with Marigold,

£16.25 for 30 caps, victoriahealth.com

Not sleeping?

Try cardamom and nutmeg

When you just need to unwind, the sedative qualities of cardamom and nutmeg are your go-to spices. Research herbalist Monica Wilde helps you find your night-time nirvana with a lush bedtime drink.

Good Night Milk

✨ Add 2 or 3 cardamom pods to a mugful of almond or oat milk and heat gently, just below boiling, for a few mins. Leave to infuse and drink before going to bed to help you get a good night's sleep.

'Grating a little nutmeg over the hot milk will also help you get some ZZZZs,' says Monica.



Headachy?

Reach for the cayenne!

Getting a stressed, migraine-style headache in the festive run-up is no surprise. 'Low blood sugar, stress, poor sleep and being overworked can all contribute,' says Monica. But what

Holiday toothache?

Get relief by diluting a few drops of clove oil in some sunflower oil. Dip a cotton bud in the oil, then bite down on it with the painful tooth. Or simply bite down on a clove!

spice to try? 'Cayenne (capsicum) is a wonderful painkiller,' says Monica. No kidding – try her easy remedies for those festive stress headaches.

PREVENT THEM: Add 1½in piece of fresh ginger root and ¼tsp of cayenne pepper to your daily smoothie. Easy!

DEAL WITH THEM: By adding a few drops of chilli oil to a body cream or 1tbsp of sunflower oil and massage into the back of your neck to relieve stress headaches. (Do a little patch test first to make sure your skin isn't sensitive.)

OR MAYBE... Try a tincture that's super easy to take. Go for *Napiers Head Blend* with capsicum and ginger in the mix. £12 for 100ml, napiers.net



Tired feet? Reboot with mustard!

You can't get everything for Christmas online – some serious footwork is still necessary. A mustard bath is a bit of an old-fashioned notion for frazzled feet, but don't knock it till you try it! Magnesium-rich mustard combined with ginger can help open pores to release toxins and stimulate circulation, and even breathing it in can help clear your sinuses – what's not to love? 'Mustard and ginger powders really wake up tired feet,' says master herbalist Amy Jirsa. 'But if yours are especially tired, add a few drops of peppermint essential oil.' We've tried it and... aaaah!

Mustard and Ginger Foot Soak

- 3tbsp ginger powder
- 6tsp mustard power

☀️ In a bowl big enough to soak your feet in, combine the powders with 3 cups of warm water.

☀️ Soak for at least 15 mins. Do this daily until the problem has passed.

Find more of Amy Jirsa's herbal wisdom in her amazing book Herbal Goddess (Storey Books, £14.99)



Cold coming on? Try a spicy tea

Just when you don't need it, a cold always seems to strike! Kill it off quickly with regular cups of super-warming tea. Monica Wilde reveals her favourite...

✳️ Make a spicy tea by grating ginger root, then add to a small saucepan, cover with water and simmer for 5 mins with 1tsp of cinnamon and 1tsp of dried thyme. Flavour with lemon for vitamin C and 1tsp of honey – it's antimicrobial and it tastes good. 'Add 1tsp of echinacea tincture or elderberry syrup as an extra immunity boost,' suggests Monica. ➡️



Christmas cravings?

Sip cinnamon tea

Oooh... the temptations that surround us right now. Sadly, all those treats play merry havoc with our blood sugar, so it's no surprise that we set off that waistline killer cycle of munching, sugar surge and cravings – eek! Cinnamon has the gift of keeping blood sugar on an even keel and puts a lid on cravings. Excellent but how do we take it? Amy Jirsa has a delish little tea that calms cravings and indulges a sweet tooth. 'I like to simmer up a big jug and keep it in the fridge,' she says. 'Drink it throughout the day on an empty stomach.' We love it hot and freshly made, or chilled to hydrate, pouring a cup when those cravings hit!

Cinnamon Tea for Blood Sugar

- 4 good quality organic cinnamon sticks
- Unsweetened soya or almond milk
- Stevia (a sweetener that won't affect your blood sugar)
- A dash of vanilla

★ Pour 4 cups of water into a small pan and add the cinnamon sticks.

★ Cover and simmer for 10 mins, then add the milk, stevia and vanilla to taste.



No energy?

Bounce back with ginger!

What we wouldn't give for some extra energy to zoom us through the stressful side of the festive season! Naturopath Rosemary Ferguson has a nifty energy boosting drink that doesn't need a juicer. 'This is the super-charged version of warm water and lemon,' she says. 'Warming, balancing and a lovely way to start the day on the right track.'

Feeling frazzled?

Calm with black pepper

Essential oils aren't just floral – the spicy ones have their plus points, too. 'Black pepper is the most useful in my book at Christmas,' says expert Glenda Taylor. 'Spicy oils are good for bloating, energy and aches and pains at this time of year. Because they're stimulating, they need to be tempered by something a bit more soothing. I love to mix with frankincense and rose geranium

for a blend that's fortifying, soothing, calming and smells divine – perfect to ease Christmas stress.'

Overindulged?

Try soothing turmeric

Okay, it's what gives curry its golden colour, but traditionally turmeric was used to strengthen digestion and relieve gas. 'A delicious taste of India, this lassi helps to soothe an upset tummy and supports good gut bacteria for a healthy digestion,' says herbalist Tipper Lewis.

Tummy Tonic Lassi

- One handful of pineapple, which contains bromelain to calm irritable tummies
- 125g unsweetened natural yoghurt – to support gut flora
- ½tsp turmeric powder, for natural liver support
- ¼tsp cardamom powder – to help ease wind and bloating
- 300ml water
- Pinch of Himalayan salt – gives the Indian lassi twist!

★ Blitz in a blender until smooth. Enjoy!

• Find turmeric and cardamom powders at nealsyardremedies.com



Fast festive de-stresser

Mix 2 drops each of black pepper, frankincense and rose geranium essential oils in a dessertspoon of jojoba oil. Massage directly on to your skin or add it to your bath for a deeply relaxing, restorative soak!

Spicy little extras...

Some to keep and maybe some to give as caring stocking fillers!

De-stress

- Ease strung out nerves in no time. *Neom Christmas Wish Scented Candle*, £49.95, neomorganics.com



Find energy

- Blend of clove and citrus essential oils to give you a lift. Add to your shower gel. What a boost! *Daybreak*, £5.50, absolute-aromas.com



Stay smooth

- Pomade Divine is ace at keeping fretful skin happy. With cinnamon, nutmeg and clove in the mix, it's a great little healer! £19.80 for 50ml, pommadedivine.com



Get gorgeous

- This lovely smelling cleanser doubles as a mask. With clove oil in the mix – great for troubled skin! *Spiezia Facial Cleanser*, £26.95 for 50ml, spieziaorganics.com



Brighten up

- When the blues come from nowhere, try Bach Flower Remedy Mustard to help bring back the joy! So easy to take. £6.99, baldwins.co.uk



Ease aches

- This cream cossets aching joints and muscles. *Capsicum and Ginger Warming Cream*, £8.50 for 100ml, napiers.net





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**Based on average consumer loading.

†377 UK shoppers surveyed, Sep '14 - Jan '15

Christmas surgery



Dr Sarah Brewer, GP and expert in complementary medicine, gives her advice to help you stay well over the festive season

The common Christmas health problems... and how to beat them

Ward off winter colds

Respiratory tract infections account for as many as one in three GP consultations between December and February, partly because vitamin D levels are lower and partly because of the effects of cold weather on the immune function in the nose. The stress of Christmas also plays a role, as does the fact that we spend more time indoors sharing our bugs. Your immune system is most active in the lining of the gut, so a healthy diet is key to shoring up your defences – that means fruit and veg for vitamins, minerals and immune-boosting antioxidants, plus oily fish, nuts and seeds for omega-3 and zinc. Onions and garlic have antiviral properties, while selenium – found in Brazil nuts – is needed to make antibodies and to stimulate natural killer cells that fight infections. Hand washing and using antibacterial hand gel and antiviral tissues all help. Echinacea has been shown to reduce the risk of developing a cold, and also shorten its duration. Try A.Vogel's new Echinaforce Hot Drink Colds & Flu (£9.99, avogel.co.uk) – it's as effective as the prescription drug oseltamivir (Tamiflu), but with a reduced risk of complications.

Avoid tummy upsets

The last thing you want over the holiday season is a bout of food poisoning. Plan ahead and, if buying a frozen turkey, calculate how long the bird needs to defrost thoroughly before cooking. Don't wash the turkey (or any poultry) as this can splash bacteria on to



worktops. Use a meat thermometer to ensure the turkey is properly cooked by inserting it into the thickest part of the thigh. The turkey is usually cooked when the thermometer shows a temperature of 75°C/167°F and the juices run clear. When it's out of the oven, cover in foil and let it rest for at least 30 minutes as this allows it to continue to cook. Remove any leftover meat from the carcass as soon as possible and store in the fridge in a lidded container away from raw meat. Reuse leftovers within two or three days.

Help for hangovers

Sorry ladies – our hangovers generally last up to nine hours (two hours longer than men's), as we process alcohol more slowly. Hangovers also become more painful as you get older. By 40, you have less water in your body to dilute

the alcohol, your liver is less efficient at processing it and you have less muscle to burn it off so a hangover feels worse. Supplements containing milk thistle or artichoke boost liver function and bile output – take milk thistle daily over the festive season (Thisilyn, £9.99 for 30 capsules, schwabepharm.co.uk) and add artichoke (Artichoke Extract, £7.95 for 120 tablets, healthspan.co.uk) when you have a party. Anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen are the best treatment for symptoms of a hangover.

Beat tiredness

While occasional lack of energy is normal, if you feel washed out for much of the time, see your doctor in case you have an underlying problem. While only one in 10 people are likely to have a medical cause for their symptoms, certain conditions need to be ruled out, such as anaemia, hormone imbalances (eg underactive thyroid), diabetes or depression. Assuming all is well otherwise, try starting your day with porridge. Following an oat-based diet that includes a high-fibre breakfast is associated with better stamina, improved mood and less tiredness during the morning. Fluid intake is also important, as even mild dehydration can cause fatigue. A multivitamin will guard against nutrient deficiencies, especially the B group vitamins needed for energy production in cells.

I also recommend a magnesium supplement plus coenzyme Q10 to improve physical energy levels. ➔





Energy booster

With today's hectic lifestyles, it's

no wonder we feel low on energy. Vitabiotics Ferroglobin B12 liquid (RRP £5.85 for 200ml) provides an effective source of nutrients, including vitamins B6 and B12 plus iron, which contribute to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue. Its blood building nutrients are ideal for adults and children over the age of three and may be of particular benefit for over 50s, athletes and women during menstruation or pregnancy. Find out more at ferroglobin.com



Overcome insomnia

A whirling mind can cause sleepless nights, which can leave you susceptible to other problems, too. People exposed to a common cold virus are three times more likely to develop symptoms if they get less than seven hours sleep a night. Avoid overly rich food, especially at night, and have a milky drink before bed, which provides calming substances such as magnesium, calcium and tryptophan – an amino acid needed for the production of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin. Other foods that contain tryptophan include turkey, bananas, oats, honey and cherry juice, which is one of the richest sources.

Coping with constipation

Affecting one in eight people at any one time, constipation becomes more common when your diet and lifestyle changes, such as eating more stodgy or rich foods, as well as lack of exercise during winter. Select 'brown' rather than white wholegrain products and eat more fibre-rich cereals such as unsweetened muesli. Nuts, figs, dates, apricots, prunes, seeds, peas, beans, salads and other fresh fruit and vegetables are also helpful. A good fluid intake is vital, while probiotic drinks will ensure a healthy balance of digestive bacteria. Natural bulking agents (eg psyllium) taken with plenty of water help to increase the frequency of bowel movements. Magnesium supplements (tablets, or as Epsom salts dissolved in warm water) are



an effective laxative – take at night for benefit the following morning. Aloe vera juice has a useful cleansing and soothing action on the intestines. If constipation lasts more than five days, or is associated with abdominal pain, vomiting or passing blood/mucus, seek medical advice.

Don't invite indigestion

Indigestion and heartburn are common at this time of year, due to overindulgence in rich, acidic or spicy foods and drinking more alcohol. Indigestion describes any discomfort such as bloating, flatulence, nausea, acidity or upper abdominal pain, while heartburn is a hot, burning sensation felt behind the chest bone, which is associated with acid reflux. Eating non-acidic, easily digestible foods will help – try white rice, oats, scrambled eggs, ripe bananas, well-cooked green leafy vegetables, watermelon and chicken broth. Milk and yoghurt provide calcium salts that help to neutralise excess acid. On Christmas Day, try having your turkey main meal, going for a walk, then having your pud a couple of hours later, taking care not to stoop, bend or lie down immediately after. A pharmacist can advise whether the more powerful, over-the-counter acid-suppressing medicines, such as ranitidine, will suit you.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE GETS ILL OVER CHRISTMAS

GP advice: Call your surgery for details of services over the holiday – if it's out of hours, a recording will guide you to the right care.

Pharmacies: Your local pharmacies open on a rota system – check your local press or call NHS 111 free of charge. NHS 111 allows you to speak to a trained adviser when it's not a 999 emergency but you need medical advice fast. They can assess your symptoms and direct you to the appropriate medical care, whether that's A&E, an out-of-hours doctor, a minor injuries unit, urgent care centre, walk-in centre, emergency dentist or late-opening chemist.

Emergencies: If it's a life-threatening emergency, such as loss of consciousness, fits, severe chest pain, breathing difficulties or severe bleeding, visit your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) unit or call 999 for an ambulance.



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A happy family Christmas *can be yours!*

Iron out those festive family glitches with our expert advice...

☀ **When is it acceptable to stop buying gifts for godchildren? Mine are now in their teens and early twenties (I have five!) and it costs me a fortune.**

'Generally, godparents are expected to give Christmas and birthday presents up until 18 or 21, but beyond that only a wedding present,' says Lucy Hume at etiquette expert Debrett's. 'If the cost of gifts is steep, a small token or a thoughtful card may be appreciated just as much.' Life coach Lynda Field adds: 'Godparents agree to support their godchildren, not buy them a present every year. Find other ways to show that you care – spend more time with them, write them a lovely letter or send them a book that you've always treasured.'

☀ **Every year, my in-laws buy me presents I loathe and then I have to remember to wear the clothes they've bought or put the trinkets on show when they visit! How can I get them to shop from my wish list instead?**

'If you haven't already, tell them you have a wish list!' says Lynda. 'They might not even realise you have one and you could find they're overjoyed to have the pressure taken off. You could also ask them if they have a list of gifts they'd like, which may also prompt them to find about more about what you'd like this Christmas. Apart from that, see it from their perspective: they've probably thought hard about buying you a gift so try to accept it graciously.'



☀ **My mum has dementia and this year is in a care home. Is it a good idea to take her out for Christmas or will that upset her routine (and put a strain on the rest of us)?**

'Everyone with dementia is different, so weigh up the potential disruption to your mum's routine compared with the possible benefits,' says Angelo Makri, helpline coordinator at Alzheimer's Society. 'If your mum has always enjoyed Christmas, the experience could outweigh any confusion. But if you feel the change will overshadow any positive effects, it might be better for her stay in the care home, or only join you for a short period. Have a couple of trials leading up to Christmas. This will also give you a chance to plan ahead, like getting extra support.' For

more information, call Alzheimer's Society helpline on 0300 222 1122 or visit alzheimers.org.uk.

☀ **My ex-husband and I are on good terms and he normally comes for Christmas lunch. However, this year I'm with a new partner, and the thought of us all being together makes me feel a bit queasy – but the kids, who are four and six, want their dad with them. How do I keep everyone happy?**

'Consider the impact on the children of having their daddy there as well as your new partner,' says Paula Hall, relationship psychotherapist and author of *Help Your Children Cope With Your Divorce: A Relate Guide* (£9.99, Vermilion). 'Even young children could find their loyalties being divided between Mum being happy with her new partner and Dad being alone. My suggestion would be that your new partner doesn't come for Christmas lunch. Perhaps he could pop





by in the afternoon or earlier in the morning. Also, consider how your ex will feel. Ideally he will welcome your new partner, but if he's not ready, then the time is not right. Remember, Christmas is just one day of the year and there are plenty of other times to include your new partner.'

✿ I went through a bitter divorce with my ex and both of us have since remarried. Every year, we argue over who will have the children on Christmas Day. Do you have any ideas?

'With a little bit of forward planning, tensions can be avoided,' says Paula. 'For many, switching between Christmas Day or Boxing Day on alternate years works well. Others choose to have Christmas Eve in one home with a special meal and presents opened on Christmas morning, before going to the other home for lunch and more presents. Communicating via email with lots of advance notice works best. And, depending on their age, include children in the decision making.'

✿ I have a houseful of family staying over the festive season, which means the spare room won't be available for my 17-year-old daughter's boyfriend. I'm not ready to put them in the same room. How do I handle this?

'Hopefully, you can talk openly to your children about sex,' says Janey Downshire, counsellor and co-founder of Teenagerstranslated.co.uk. 'In this day and age, talking about sex needs to not be embarrassing, for either of you. Have this chat a few weeks before Christmas. Explain that, with a houseful, her boyfriend might have to stay in a camp bed in the lounge. Or, perhaps suggest he could stay in her room this time, but in future they'll be back in separate bedrooms. Chat together rather than be dictatorial; that's a red rag to a teenager.'

✿ For various reasons, money is tighter this year. How do we buy smaller gifts and indulge less but still make everyone feel special?

'Firstly, you need to try to get over the psychological aspect,' says

Kalpna Fitzpatrick, founder of Mummymoneymatters.com. 'You may have convinced yourself it's unacceptable to make do with cheaper purchases, when your family aren't thinking the same. Try to shop smarter. Make use of pre-Christmas flash sales alongside cashback sites, such as Quidco (quidco.com) or TopCashback (topcashback.co.uk). Handmade gifts are always extra



special. If you like the idea but don't think you'd be any good at it, then head off to a local Christmas fair and you could end up with some gems at reasonable prices.' ➔

☀ **My sister is hell-bent on turning my seven- and nine-year-old daughters into teenagers by buying them make-up and crop tops. I don't want to offend her, but how do I get her to stop?**

'Take a deep breath and talk to her,' says Janey. 'Then she'll know how important this is to you. Try to agree with your sister what you consider appropriate and what's off limits. You might think that clothes they can dress up in, pretending to be grown-ups inside the house, are a giggle, but explain you don't want them wearing outfits that are "older than their years" out of the house. Back up the chat with facts about the sexualisation of young girls. Explain that you'll be happy for them to explore things when the time is right, but you don't want to open Pandora's Box any earlier than you need to.'



☀ **Our teens spend their entire lives glued to one screen or another. How can I get them to look up on Christmas Day and actually communicate with real people?**

'Family "limits" should apply at any time of year, not just Christmas,' says Janey. 'If screen time is important to you, then make it one of those rules. Suggest phones and other devices get put away at mealtimes, on silent, so you can all chat. Ask your teenagers if that sounds reasonable so they buy into it, too. And then before Christmas itself, suggest a longer time. Say something like: "Can we have a 'no screen' time on

Christmas Day? I was thinking 12pm to 3pm, so we can enjoy each other's company. How does that sound?" Remember you have to stick to the rule, too, so put that phone away!'

☀ **I love going to parties over Christmas, but my husband hates them and thinks I get tipsy and flirtatious when I'm just having fun. Any suggestions for a compromise?**

'Ask your husband if he can be specific about the behaviour that he sees as flirtatious,' says Paula. 'Is it particular words that you say or your body language? Once you fully understand what he's struggling with, you will be able to decide if you can, and want to, change. If you honestly feel there's no harm in what you are doing, then ask your husband how you can reassure him. Spending more time talking to him at parties, or including him in conversations could be a compromise that can work for both of you. You may still need to watch your alcohol intake to ensure you can put these measures in place.'

☀ **Back from university for the holidays, my teenagers spend Christmas Eve on a pub crawl and emerge around noon on Christmas Day, which ruins it for me – and my elderly parents are horrified. What should I do?**

'The ability to show empathy is still a work in progress for the teenage brain, so in this case you need to point out granny's perspective and guide them towards a compromise,' explains Janey. 'Chatting about it a few days before Christmas Eve will make it feel less confrontational. Say: "I know you like going out with your friends, but it's also a family time for us, so what would be a reasonable time for you to come home?" Also remind them that it's lovely to open presents together with the extended family, so ask if they'll be happy to get up by, say, 9am. By giving them a say in things, they're much more likely to stick to it.'



☀ **I've cooked Christmas lunch year after year for my family and cannot face it this year. How do I tactfully pass the mantle to someone else, or get everyone to go out for lunch?**

'There's no need for tact – just say you're not doing it this year and wait for someone else to come up with a different plan!' says Lynda. 'You may find that they'd like to change things, too, but didn't want to offend you by suggesting it. If no one steps in with a solution, just do Christmas as you want to this year. It could be liberating or it could totally throw you. You won't know unless you try it.' Lucy has another solution: 'You could always choose to invite fewer people – or no one at all! If you do choose to go out, make it clear if you're acting as "host", so your guests will know who is going to pay.'

☀ **My brother's wife has a list of dietary requirements as long as your arm (food allergies, etc). It drives me insane tailoring the cooking when I'm hosting the big day. Can I tell her to bring her own food?**

'Most people with food intolerances are very nervous about eating anywhere where they don't have control,' says Lynda. 'Explain to her how worried you are about getting it right, especially on such a busy day with so many different foods lying around the kitchen. Raise that concern – which is genuine – and I'm pretty sure she'll be more than happy to bring at least one dish of her own.'

Prima promotion

Where to next?

Travelling makes Leigh Knight feel young and carefree – and now nothing can stop her from planning her next adventure

There is nothing Leigh loves more than setting off on holiday, whether she's travelling on her own to the USA to visit friends, or driving through Europe with her husband for six weeks. 'From planning the trip to packing my suitcases, the anticipation of freedom is palpable. I feel alive when I'm travelling – it makes me feel 20 years younger, and brings out a carefree attitude in me!' she says.

But she hasn't always felt this relaxed. As one of the 47% of women in the UK who experience bladder weakness*, Leigh used to worry a lot about keeping fresh – but not since she discovered TENA Lady, the UK's number-one bladder weakness brand**. Now, at 55, she feels more confident and self-assured than ever. 'Thanks to TENA Lady, I can relax knowing that tucked in my handbag I have my little passports to freedom,' says Leigh. 'They've replaced all my worries and have given me the confidence to try new things – and I'm always ready for my next adventure.'

**'I have
found the
confidence
to be more
spontaneous
and have fun
– that's what
travelling is
all about'**



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11



12



13

Super chic

14

Just gorgeous



15



16



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18



17

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20



21



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Kids will love this funky scooter

Christmas Day best

1 Wooden shopping trolley, £25, George **2** Colour Changing Bus Jacket, £39, Squid at Notonthehighstreet.com **3** Red5 balloon dog light, £14.99, Argos **4** Despicable Me 2 walkie talkie set, £15, Debenhams **5** Yummy Nummies Soda Shopper, £20, Hamleys **6** Retro Racing Ride On Car, £39, Halfords **7** Goldilocks and the three bears, £10, Wilko **8** Mini Micro Special Edition scooter, £64.95; Jungle Helmet, £24.95, both Micro Scooters **9** Knitted hats, £12 each, Oliver Bonas **10** Christmas cardigan, from £17; Geo santa shirt, from £11, both Next **11** Soft tiger, £8, Ikea

for teens



- 1** Leaning Tree jewellery storage box, £29.50, Rockett St George **2** Justice League of America stacking mugs, £20.99, Truffle Shuffle **3** Make-up bag, £12, Accessorize **4** Skullcandy Grind headphones, £39.99, Argos **5** Sprouts boys T-shirt, £25, John Lewis **6** Funky Christmas girls sweatshirt, £35, 4-18, ASOS **7** Sound Boutique bluetooth dancing water speakers, £30, Debenhams **8** Shoulder bag, £22, Topshop **9** Miss Selfridge Nail Polish Palette, £12, BHS **10** Magnetic darts set, £9.99, The Oak Room **11** Zoella's Bath Bombinis bath fizzers, £10, Superdrug **12** Ted Baker Peony Brogue notebook, £12.95, Amara **13** Ghost Girl perfume, £23, Superdrug **14** Emma Lomax London Luscious Lips wash bag, from £15, Amara 

for home lovers



1 Emma Bridgewater Folk 8½in plate, £17.95; Emma Bridgewater Polka Folk cake plate, £39.95, both emmabridgewater.co.uk **2** 9-piece Gem espresso mug set, £24.95, Wayfair.co.uk **3** Boutique hotel wine and Champagne glasses, £6 each, John Lewis **4** Winter robin jug, £12, Sainsbury's **5** Subscribe to *House Beautiful*, see page 178 for details **6** Frozen Finish vase, £20, BHS **7** *Voyages Over Paris* framed print, from £47, Red Candy **8** Marvellous Meadows Prima bouquet, from £20.99, Flying Flowers **9** Glisten tea-light holder, £12 for 2, Next **10** Folk wooden heart-shaped bowl, £25, Marks & Spencer **11** Metal mugs, £15 each; Gold Mint enamel bowl, £30, all Oliver Bonas **12** Ted Baker Tile Floral cushion, £25, House of Fraser **13** Piped Bird Cage cushion, £14, Tesco

for garden lovers



- 1** Bird house, £10, Tesco **2** Blooming Lovely small watering can, £15, Caroline Gardner **3** Haws ladies' leather gauntlet gloves, £27.99, Gettingpersonal.co.uk **4** Gubbins pots with tray, £19.95, Sophie Conran **5** Rosa Chinensis notebook, £8.95; plant labels, £7.95; twine in a tin, £8.95, all Annabel James **6** Crabtree & Evelyn Gardeners 60 Second Fix Kit for Hands, £8, Amazon **7** Reindeer lantern, £14.99, Dobbies **8** Garden mugs, £8 each, Marks & Spencer **9** V&A trowel and fork in Palamos, £19.95 each, Wild & Wolf **10** Roots & Shoots seed box, £25, Magpie **11** Set of 5 jute garden ties, £2.95, Dotcomgiftshop **12** Thoughtful Gardener mini greenhouse, £34.95, Red Candy

REMEMBER A LOVED ONE THIS CHRISTMAS

WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT

Losing a loved one to cancer is one of the toughest things a family can go through. This Christmas you can remember someone you've lost with a Macmillan Christmas Star.

Donate just £5 today and we'll send you the Macmillan Christmas Star as a thank you. Your £5 will help Macmillan nurses provide urgently needed support for people facing cancer this Christmas and their families.

Give £5 to Macmillan Cancer Support by texting

STAR13 to 70550

or call **0800 408 3861**. We'll send you a Christmas Star in memory of a loved one and your gift will help make sure no one faces cancer alone. Thank you.

Texts cost £5 + std rate. Obtain billpayers permission. Age 16+. UK mobiles only. We will call or text you back to take your details to post your Christmas Star and to talk to you about ways you can support us. Visit <http://goo.gl/8MidHb> if you'd rather we didn't or to optout of future SMS text STOP to 70550. Macmillan Cancer Support is a registered charity in England & Wales 261017, Scotland SC039907, and Isle of Man 604. We receive 100% of your donation. Full Terms and Conditions at <http://goo.gl/uMS4AL>. Queries? 0300 1000 200

for food lovers



- 1** Baci di Dama hazelnut and chocolate biscuits, £17.95, Carluccio's **2** Ceramic measuring cups, £16.95, House of Bath **3** Reindeer wine rack, £19.99, Notonthehighstreet.com **4** Cheese knives, £25, House of Fraser **5** Drinks by the Dram Christmas crackers, £37.95, Amazon **6** Artisan du Chocolat sea salted caramels with spiced figs, £14.99, John Lewis **7** Panettone al Prosecco, £10, Marks & Spencer **8** Cartwright & Butler acacia honey with comb, £10.95, Harrods **9** Christmas pudding in ceramic bowl, £24.95, Highgrove **10** Decanter, £48.95, Annabel James **11** Chili, salt and pepper mills, £14 each, Next **12** The Wine Atlas wines, from £4 each, Asda **13** Fichi al Rhum chocolate bar, £6.95, Carluccio's ➔

for craft lovers

1



2



3



Fabulous gift

4



Sew beautiful!

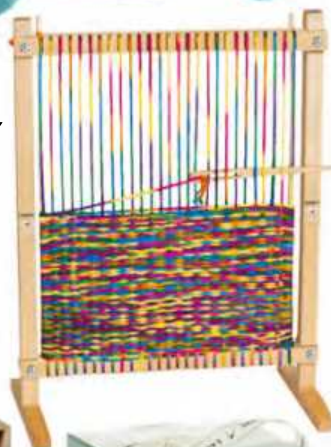
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9



10



11



- 1** The Makery Cuckoo Clock craft kit for kids, £9.95, Wild & Wolf **2** Ella Doran wet paint tote bag, £32.50, Tate Shop
3 Royal & Langnickel All Media Easel Artist Set (104 pieces), £48, Amazon **4** Lola Pom slippers knitting kit, £28, Stitch & Story
5 Flowers of Liberty sewing machine, £195, Liberty **6** Make your own notebook kit, £14, Cath Kidston **7** Multi-craft loom (age 6+), £30, Aspace **8** Sewing box, £22.50, Marks & Spencer **9** Owl knitting bag, £17.95; yarn holder, £9.95, both House of Bath
10 Craft and ribbon storage house, £32, The Contemporary Home **11** Make your own votive candles, £25, Laura Ashley

Stocking fillers

All under £10!



1 Manicure set, £7, Next 2 Doodle pad, £3, Marks & Spencer
 3 Pens, £1 each, Tiger 4 Wobbly Snowman and Santa Tins of Shortbread, £8 each, Walkers Shortbread 5 Make Your Own Landmark Eiffel Tower craft kit, £3.95, Dotcomgiftshop 6 T-shirt Graffiti, £5.99, Pink Sumo 7 Afternoon Tea Mini Tray, £7, BHS
 8 Santa's Little Helpers, £2.79 for a pack of 5, Lindt

So cool!

Very cute

For where to buy, see page 193



HEAD LIGHT

ADVERTISEMENT

Clap, shout or stomp

The mouth flashes with green light in time to the sound!

Light-up cap with 2 settings

- Colour Changing
- White Light

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amazon Argos ToysRUs

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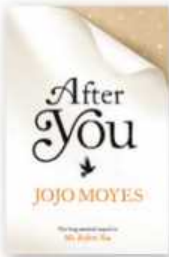
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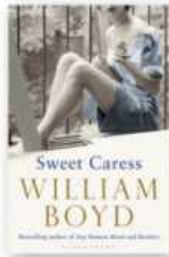
The best books for

When you're stumped for what to buy a friend or family member, there's nothing

Best reads



After You by Jojo Moyes (Michael Joseph, £20) Lou is trying to make a life without Will in this heartbreaking and heartwarming sequel to *Me Before You*.



Sweet Caress by William Boyd (Bloomsbury, £18.99) The life and loves of photographer Amory Clay as she witnesses all the important bits of the 20th century.



The Lake House by Kate Morton (Mantle, £18.99) Policewoman Sadie is on leave when she stumbles upon an abandoned house and an unsolved mystery...



The Versions of Us by Laura Barnett (W&N, £12.99) The story of Eva and Jim twists and turns over many decades in this thought-provoking love story. Great read.

Food & drink



Chocolate Fit for a Queen by Historic Royal Palaces (Ebury, £10) Chocolate recipes from the Royal kitchens that will delight and inspire.



Eating Well Made Easy by Lorraine Pascale (HarperCollins, £20) An essential guide to making delicious and nutritious food a part of our everyday lives.



Everyday Super Food by Jamie Oliver (Michael Joseph, £26) The superstar chef turns his talents to making healthy eating enjoyable and achievable.



Nopi: The Cookbook by Yotam Ottolenghi (Ebury, £28) A collection of 120 recipes from the author's famous Soho restaurant. A feast for all the senses.



Simply Nigella: Feel Good Food by Nigella Lawson (Chatto & Windus, £26) A celebration of food and its soothing and uplifting qualities. A complete pleasure.

Coffee table delights



Vogue: The Jewellery by Carol Woolton (Conran Octopus, £75) This wonderful book showcases a century of jewellery photography, themed on subjects such as classic, minimalist and exotic, as seen in the pages of *Vogue*.



Great Gardens of London by Victoria Summerley (Frances Lincoln, £30) Beautiful and captivating photographs of the finest London gardens – most of which are rarely open to the public.



Human: A Portrait of our World by Yann Arthus-Bertrand (Thames & Hudson, £19.95) Portraits of individuals in a collection that strives to give an overall view of humanity. Simply stunning.



Waterside Modern by Dominic Bradbury (Thames & Hudson, £19.95) An inspirational look at the most breathtaking waterside homes from around the world, including the Med, Pacific Ocean and Southeast Asia.



giving

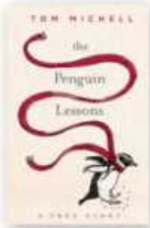


Brilliant reads 



better than a book. We've searched for the perfect choice so you don't have to!

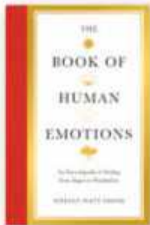
Under the tree for grown-ups



The Penguin Lessons by Tom Michell (Michael Joseph, £9.99) The story of a real friendship with a penguin after the author rescued him from an oil slick. **Out 5 Nov**



A Notable Woman by Jean Lucey Pratt (Canongate, £20) Fascinatingly detailed diaries of life during the Second World War and beyond. **Out 5 Nov**



The Book of Human Emotions by Tiffany Watt (Profile, £14.99) Delightful encyclopedia of the words we use to express how we feel. Perfect to dip into.



A Christmas Party by Georgette Heyer (Arrow, £7.99) A locked room mystery in a county manor – can Inspector Hemingway find the murderer? **Out 19 Nov**

Under the tree for kids



A Boy Called Christmas by Matt Haig (Canongate, £12.99) Charming story of how Nikolas the woodcutter's son grew up to be Father Christmas. A future classic. **Out 12 Nov**



Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone: Illustrated Edition by JK Rowling (Bloomsbury Children's, £30) Fab gift for Harry Potter fans young and old. Magical illustrations.



Lego: Awesome Ideas (DK Children, £16.99) A super present for the Lego enthusiast in your life – of whatever age.



What the Ladybird Heard Next by Julia Donaldson (Macmillan Children's Books, £11.99) The antics of the clever ladybird and her friends are joyous.

Home & garden



Styling Made Simple by Katy Holder (Hardie Grant, £18.99) Creative and affordable ideas to jazz up entertaining at home. **Out 5 Nov**



Keeping House by Cindy Harris (Ryland Peters & Small, £16.99) Not keen on housework? Here's how to turn chores into art and learn to love home making.



Making a Garden by Carol Klein (Mitchell Beazley, £25) How to look at nature in the wild to inspire an even more beautiful garden.



Winter Living by Selina Lake (Ryland Peters & Small, £19.99) Ideas to make your home cosy throughout the colder months.

Crafty capers

Do it Yourself by Thomas B  thaler (Phaidon Press, £19.95) 50 world class artists



and designers offer things of beauty to make at home with only basic skills and tools.

Sew Scandinavian: 35 Stylish Projects to Stitch by Kajsa Kinsella (CICO, £12.99)



Beautiful and elegant projects inspired by the author's Swedish childhood.

Calming Art Therapy Colouring Book by Richard Merritt and Hannah Davies



(Michael O'Mara Books, £12.99) Join the new craze for adults and colour yourself calm. **Out 8 Oct**

Benedict Cumberstitch by Colleen Carrington (Kyle Books, £9.99) Recreate



everyone's fave actor as Hamlet, Sherlock or himself in a tuxedo. Lots of fun!

This year's tech treats *all wrapped up*

It's the peak time of the year for buying and giving gadgets. So here are Christmas 2015's highlights...



This year's hot buys

AMAZON FIRE HD KIDS EDITION

Chuck this tantrum-proof tablet computer across the room (we did) and it will survive. Filled with features to occupy little fingers, the creative software lets children add stickers and drawings to their photos. A clever parental mode enables you to set time limits and block in-app purchases. £119, Amazon



FUJIFILM INSTAX SHARE SP-1 MOBILE PHOTO PRINTER

Go retro and print out a real photo! This mini printer is portable enough to pop in your bag and take with you on adventures. Just download the Fujifilm app and print instant credit card-sized photos direct from your phone. Perfect for teens or for relatives who aren't online. Printer, £129; pack of 20 sheets, £14.99, both John Lewis



LG URBANE SMARTWATCH

There's nothing geeky about this silver smartwatch, which hides its high-tech self behind a classic steel face and luxury leather strap. The watch displays texts, emails and social media updates! Compatible with Android 4.3 phones or higher.



This season's most
covetable gifts

This year's cool gadgets

Tech with the 'wow factor'

REAL WOOD

HOUSE OF MARLEY LIBERATE EARPHONES

Inspired by reggae superstar Bob, House of Marley's well-made products support 1Love, the Marley family charitable organisation. These soulful headphones are eco friendly and sound as good as they look. £49.99, House of Marley



CLIC WOODEN IPHONE CASE

This slender iPhone case is handcrafted from solid American timber. Smooth and surprisingly lightweight, it comes in a choice of colour combinations including olive and walnut and coral and cherry wood (left). £34.99, Native Union



PURE EVOKE D4 RADIO

Go nuts for this digital and FM radio – it's cased in either real oak or walnut (below). As well as its handsome charm, it has plenty of features such as alarms, a touch-sensitive Snoozehandle, and an optional rechargeable battery. £129.99, Pure



6 stocking fillers

Under
£30

Forget satsumas; these modern-day gifts will raise a cheer



1 LUCKIES OF LONDON SMARTPHONE PROJECTOR

Teens (and adults!) will love this cardboard projector that you construct yourself, then use to show smartphone videos. A winner at Christmas and beyond. £16.55, *Amazon*



2 MISFIT FLASH ACTIVITY AND SLEEP TRACKER

The simple, easy-to-use Misfit Flash is one of the best value trackers. You can wear it on your wrist, it's waterproof and the battery lasts for up to six months. £24.95, *John Lewis*



3 KITSOUND BUDDY OWL HEAR BAND

These cute earmuffs have a soft furry lining to keep your ears cosy, as well as integral earphones so you can listen to your favourite tracks on a frosty walk. £12.50, *John Lewis*



4 KIDIZOOM SMART WATCH

Tech whizz kids will love wearing their own smartwatch, especially one with a built-in camera, voice-recording ability, games and a stopwatch. £29.99, *Amazon*



5 JBL GO SPEAKER

This fantastic portable speaker streams music via Bluetooth from smartphones and tablets. It's small, light and plays for five hours before you need to recharge. £24.99, *JBL*

6 RETRAK EUSELFIW SELFIE STICK

If you know someone who strives for the perfect selfie, they will love this extendable stick (up to 1.2m). There's no need for a remote control; simply plug in your mobile and shoot. £7.99, *Currys*



LUXURY LEATHER

LG G4 SMARTPHONE

With its red leather casing, this smartphone is like a piece of luxury luggage. It has a sharp 5.5in screen and the 16 megapixel camera takes impressive photos, even in low light. If you tend to have a squished banana or leaky pen in your bag, you can swap to the gold plastic cover that also comes with it. *Contracts from £29 a month, Vodafone*



POWER LINK TASSEL

Attached to your handbag or keys, this tassel adds a bit of style. It's made from quality fine grain leather – in marine blue, tan or coral red (right) – and has a hidden purpose. Inside the tassel's tiny pouch are USB connectors, so you can power up your phone on the go from any USB outlet. £49.99, *Native Union*



KNOMO KNOMAD AIR LEATHER PORTABLE ORGANISER

A gorgeous case for tablet computers up to 10in, the Knomad is an organiser, too. Made from smooth leather, it has space for your credit cards and smartphone. Available in five colours, including this zingy tomato red (left). £89, *John Lewis*



SHIMMERING METALLICS

NIKON 1 J5 COMPACT CAMERA

With interchangeable lenses, this stylish camera should satisfy the most demanding photographer. It shoots photos and movies in ultra-sharp HD and 4K and takes impressive action shots. It's wi-fi enabled, too, and has a touch-sensitive tilting screen for self portraits. £299, *Currys*



WILD & WOLF LOBBY TELEPHONE

If your hallway – or boudoir – needs some Hollywood glamour, install a lobby phone. This chrome telephone is based on a classic 1930s design, once found in grand hotel lobbies. It's had a few 21st-century updates, including a push button dial, but it still has a great old-fashioned ring. £65, *John Lewis*



LENOVO YOGA 2

More than a laptop, the flexy Yoga 2 flips back 360 degrees into Tablet, Stand and Tent mode. Slim and portable, it's a good choice if you're unsure whether to buy a tablet or a laptop. 11.6in version, £339.99, *Lenovo*



MONOCLE SPEAKER

Beautifully designed with a brushed copper finish, this personal speaker looks way more expensive than its modest price tag. You can even wear it – for music on the move, when you're walking or running – as the retro cord loops securely through a bag or belt. £34.99 each, *Native Union*



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What you smell.

What your
guests smell.



Have you gone noseblind?

Febreze truly eliminates odours and leaves a light Christmas scent.

Breathe Happy



IT'S CHRISTMAS... *come on in!*

Step inside for all the inspiration you need to make this the most beautiful Christmas ever, with 11 pages of brilliant ideas to create a magical home ➔

All is calm, all is bright...

Set the scene for your perfect Christmas with cosy textures, fabulous festive accessories, hints of sparkly gold and lashings of seasonal red

Snuggle up with layers of throws and cushions, keeping things stylish with hints of grey and white to complement the red. Add some gold decorations to keep things warm and welcoming. To finish, bring the outdoors in with natural foliage and berries. The fire's roaring, so pour yourself a glass of mulled wine and enjoy!



Dhurrie **cube**, £55, Next. Trivandrum **rug**, £495, OKA. Crumpet **sofa**, £1,195, Loaf. **Cushions** (l-r): Niki Jones lattice, £85, Rockett St George. Sailor stripe, £25, John Lewis. Geometric pom-pom (in grey), from £16, Next. Grain stripe, £40, Ian Mankin. Grey, £10, Next. Red and white geo cushion, £35, Houseology. Geometric pom-pom (in red), from £16, Next. AINA **curtains**, £45 for a pair, Ikea; trimmed with Picus Rocoto satin, £32 per m, Romo; and Dolce pom-pom fringe, from a selection, Samuel & Sons. On tree: **topper**, £1, Tesco. **Baubles**: Ruby glass, £4.50 each, Rockett St George. Grey star, £16.50 for 6, Cox & Cox. Pyramid, £10 for 2; Noella paper, from £2; gold star, £8 for 3, all Habitat. Woollen, £22 for 4, House of Fraser. **Sack**, £5, Tesco. Personalised **mini sacks**, £8, Harrow & Green at Notonthehighstreet.com



Wrapping paper, from a selection, Cox & Cox and Pen to Paper. All **ribbon**, £1 per m, Jane Means. Dalesford **coffee table**, £125, Next. On table: **Mugs**, £7 each, John Lewis. Noella **paper red tree**, £15, Habitat. **Glass car decorations**, £12 each, House of Fraser. Callas **mirror**, £395, Graham and Green. On mantel: glass **bottles**, from £28, Nordic House. **Hanging star**, £4.99, Dunelm. **Candle sticks**, £17.50 each, Graham and Green. Wooden **star light**, £10, George. **Stocking**, £24.50, Ian Mankin. Olivia **armchair** in Cranberry velvet, £1,115, Neptune. On armchair: **Cushion**, £14; **throw**, £25, both Next. High Five **shelving unit**, £495, Loaf. On shelves: **Vase**, £30, Next. **Bowl**, £12.95, Nkuku. **Copper tray**, £17, Oliver Bonas. **Noel sign**, £15, BHS. **Throw**, £25, Sainsbury's

Throw, £25, Sainsbury's.
Cushions: Santa, £8, Tesco. Diamond print, £59, Houseology. GreenGate **plate**, £14, Houseology. **Napkin**, £5 for 2, Tesco Direct.
Chair, as before



Sophie Conran mini **cake stand**, £22, John Lewis.
Cloche with scene, £14.99, Dobbies. White **baubles**, £5.50, Cox & Cox. Marble **candle holder**, £11, Oliver Bonas. **Mini Christmas trees**, from £2.99, Clarke's Office Supplies. Red **bauble**, £5 for 12, Marks & Spencer

The colour of the season

FAR LEFT: It has to be red! Keep things fresh by layering different tones and patterns. Place a beautiful seasonal cushion alongside your usual everyday ones for an instant festive touch.

Fireside story

LEFT: Create an imaginative mantel display by turning a cake stand into a winter wonderland. Try adding a decorative cloche, mini trees, baubles and a cute candle.

All present and correct

Get creative by hanging stockings and gifts from a large branch from the garden (or use a decorative pole). Just delightful!



Pom-pom garland, £14, Rockett St George. **Bunting**, £5.95 for 3m, Nkuku. **Snowflake stickers**, £5.50, Cox & Cox. Noella **paper baubles**, as before. **Ho Ho Ho letters**, £4 each, Abode. **Mini Santa hat**, £5 for 8, Berry Red



Pretty as a picture

Simple is always best when it comes to window displays. White adornments, such as the pom-pom garland, are the ideal complement to red paper lanterns. Looking out or looking in, it's a win/win!

LEFT: On branch: **Lights**, £10, Talking Tables. Felt **robin**, £7, Sophie Conran. **Mini Santa hat**, as before. Make your own Christmas **keyring**, £11, Clara and Macy at Notonthehighstreet.com. **Stockings**: large, from £19.10, Etsy; Pom-pom, £20, Habitat. Gold **wishbone**, £9.50, Rockett St George. Festive **hula hoop**, £1, Poundland. **Santa sack**, £65, Ian Mankin. Whatsit **bench**, £275, Loaf. **Cushions**: Bah humbug, £12, Tesco. Stripe panel, £45, Houseology. Grey **basket**, £75 for 3, Nordic House. **Throw**, £35, Habitat. **Rug**, £165, Loaf

Warmest welcome

Make the day magical from the moment guests step into your hallway. Add festive greenery with fresh flowers or do something different by placing them in a unique vase – just like this reindeer head! Hang baubles and a wreath on the stairs to create a fun frame for a well-dressed console.

Garland, £20, Tesco.
Baubles, £8 for 6, Sainsbury's. **Wreath**, £50, House of Fraser.
Empire console table, £249, Scumble Goosie.
 On console: stag's head **vase**, £49.99, Dobbies. Noella **paper decoration**, as before.
Star, £4.99, Dunelm.
 Gold **bowl**, £10, Habitat.
 Birch **candle**, £10, Nordic House.
Lantern, £2.99, Dobbies. **Wooden Advent calendar**, £45, House of Fraser.
 Dazie bell **decorations**, £15 for 15, Habitat.
 Diddy **glass vase**, £9.95 for 3, Nordic House.
 Red **telephone**, £55, Graham and Green.
Basket, £75 for 3, Nordic House.
 Midwinter forest **wrapping paper**, £12.50, Cox & Cox



A magical festive table

You'll spend lots of time at your Christmas table, so let's make it special! And yes, you really can do it with less effort than you might think. Start with something as simple as a plain white linen table cloth, and then you can build from there, adding hints of red, green and gold. Our easy, beautiful ideas will help you add the finishing touches.



Marcelle **dining table**, £899, John Lewis. Bossy **chairs**, £250 for 2, Loaf. **Chandeliers**, £172.50 each, Graham and Green. Budge **bench**, £295 large, Loaf. On table: Linen **tablecloth**, £79.99 (170cm x 320cm), Linen Me. Linum Sarna **napkins**, £23 for 4, Houseology. **Crackers**, £25 for 10, House of Fraser. Felt **robins**, as before. IVRIG **Champagne glasses**, £1.50 each, Ikea. Tea-light **ceramic houses**, £60 for 3, Sophie Conran. Ruffled **pie dish**, £24.90, Houseology. Mini Mae brass **candelabra**, £22, Rowen & Wren. Textured **vase**, £25, House of Fraser



Cloche with scene, as before. On bench: **Cushions:** Green and white stripe, £30, Nordic House. Sailor stripe, as before. On chest: Gold star **dish**, £10.50, Cox & Cox. Wooden **Advent calendar**; Birch **candle**, as before. LED **gingerbread house**, £3.50, Tesco. **Glass bottles**, as before. Uka **bowl**, £12.95, Nkuku. **Star**, £21 for 2, Cox & Cox. On mirror: Wooden **alphabet tag**, £3.50 each, Nkuku. Midwinter streets **sticker**, £10.50, Cox & Cox



Karndean
Designflooring

Jezfest vs. Karndean:

Jeremy & Vanessa's Story

"I'd always decided that I was going to have a big party for my 50th. One of my friends enjoyed it so much they said - Never mind Glastonbury, this is Jezfest!"

"We turned the hallway into a dancefloor in previous years whereas now having an open plan room and nice flooring we were able to congregate in here, confident that we didn't have to worry about anything happening to the floor."

Watch their story at:
karndean.com/jezfest



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Karndean is perfect for
your home, giving you
a practical and beautiful
looking floor.

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Attention seekers

Make your table displays stand out with a unique centrepiece.

BELOW: Transform a plain tray into a winter scene by filling a pretty glass display with bottles, berries and faux snow.

Tray, £14, Nordic House. **Mini terrarium**, £25, Oliver Bonas. **Mini bottles**, £9.99 for 6, Loop the Loop. **Mini Christmas trees**, as before. **Decorative snow**, £6.50 for a bag, Cox & Cox. **Lights**, £10, Talking Tables. **Marble candle holders**, as before



ABOVE: Warm things up with a mini ring candle holder – it looks fantastic and takes up little space.

Beaded **placemat**, £12 for 2, Tesco. Wooden **plate**, £12.95, Nkuku. Mini Mae brass **candelabra**, as before. **Mini candles**, £8 for 20, Rowen & Wren. Faux snowberry **garland**, £18.75, Nordic House. **Centrepiece** is an artichoke sprayed gold



Gold star **platter**, £45, Graham and Green. Triple layer Victoria sponge **cake**, £45, Betsy's Bake. Faux snowberry **garland**, as before

ABOVE: Turn your Christmas cake into the star attraction with a fabulous golden cake stand.

A special place

Take your pick from these pretty but easy-to-create place settings.

BELOW: Personalised baubles are a fun way to greet your guests. The addition of pine cones to a bowl creates a suitably festive feel.

Beaded silver **placemat**, £12 for 2, Tesco. Floris dinner **plate**, £40 for 4, Loaf. Filigree pastry **plate**, £6.80, Denby. **Bowl**, as before. Personalised **ceramic baubles**, £12 each, Twenty-Seven at Notonthehighstreet.com



ABOVE: Scandi-patterned tableware layered in contrasting colours looks effortlessly stylish. The perfect home for a Christmas robin!

Zea **plate**, £10, Habitat. GreenGate **plate**, as before. Christmas **cookies**, £23 for 12, Cakeycoo at Notonthehighstreet.com. Felt **robin**, as before. Eyelet **tag**, £2 for 10, Jane Means



ABOVE: Relaxed can still be chic. A festive red napkin tied with string and placed on a wooden side plate, looks so welcoming.

ENIGT **plate**, £2.50, Ikea. Wooden **plate**, £12.95, Nkuku. Red linen Philippe **napkin** with fringes, £5.49 each, Linen Me. **Rope**, £1 per m, Brighton Sewing Centre. Skuren **cutlery**, £20 for 24, Ikea. Red **bowl**, £16.50, Houseology. Diddy glass **vase**, £9.95 for 3, Nordic House



Clean the toughest food first time.



Removes grease*
from your filter.



*For limescale removal use Fairy dishwasher cleaner.

LOVES THE
IMPOSSIBLE

Chair leaders Adorn your guests' chairs with seasonal decorations. Pom-poms optional!



A simple twig hung by ribbon from a chair is a quick and easy way to create your own display. Mini baubles look brilliant or you could hang little gifts.

Twigs: rummage in your garden! **Ribbons,** as before. **Baubles:** Nutcracker, £1, Tesco Direct. Red cone, £9.50 for 6, Talking Tables. Christmas pudding, £2 for 3, Tesco Direct. Ceramic snowflake, 99p each, Dunelm



Sprinkle some seasonal greetings with a handwritten welcome message for your guests – go on, chalk up your favourite festive saying.

Mini Santa hat, as before. **Chalkboard bunting,** £15, Loop the Loop. Midwinter forest **wrapping paper;** **Ribbons;** Eyelet **tags,** all as before. Pew dining chair, £115, John Lewis



Collect off-cuts of Christmas fabric or ribbon and tie them to a chair back, entwined with foliage, for a homely, hand-finished feel. So pretty and super easy to do.

Ticking 01 Peony cotton, £24.50 per m, Ian Mankin. You can find similar hessian and neutral fabric in most fabric shops, from around £2 per m

Little extras Don't forget these finishing touches!



ABOVE: Who said baubles have to stay on trees? They look fab displayed in gorgeous glasses...

Biba gold rim **glasses,** £14 each, House of Fraser. **Baubles,** as before. Linum Sarna **tray,** £23, Houseology

BELOW: Food served on wood is cool and contemporary. This board looks amazing and it'll earn its place at your table for years to come.

Paddle **chopping board,** £29, Rockett St George. Scalloped edge zinc **tray,** £4.50, Nordic House. Mini **Christmas puddings,** £1 each, Sainsbury's. Eyelet **tag,** as before



ABOVE: Get the festivities started on Christmas Eve with mulled wine and mince pies. Dress up the glasses with snowflakes tied with string and serve on a glam tray. Cheers!

Deco **tray,** £35, Marks & Spencer. Glass **mugs,** £1.50 each; **twine,** £3 for 40m, all Ikea. **Snowflakes,** £6 per pack, Nordic House. Twist and stir **spoon,** £14 for 2, Oliver Bonas. Linum Sarna **napkins,** as before

Sarah Beeny's Love your HOME

How do you create the perfect Christmas home? Throw taste out the window and go completely OTT, says Sarah Beeny, who also lets us in on her own family traditions



 I love to make my own decorations by gathering hand-picked greenery and mixing it with cheap red baubles.

Go for a walk in the park and collect lots of holly, ivy and yew to bulk out the decorations. Slicing oranges, drying them in the oven and hanging them from the tree using ribbon mixed with cinnamon sticks not only looks lovely but smells fab, too. Lastly, don't leave out the paper chains – they may have been fashionable when breaded mushrooms and vol-au-vents were in but they still deserve their place. And they have the advantage of keeping kids busy for hours!

 The favourite thing I take out every year is a slightly manky, plastic fairy with a large paper skirt that my mother had as a child. It has sat on the top of my Christmas tree for 43 years!

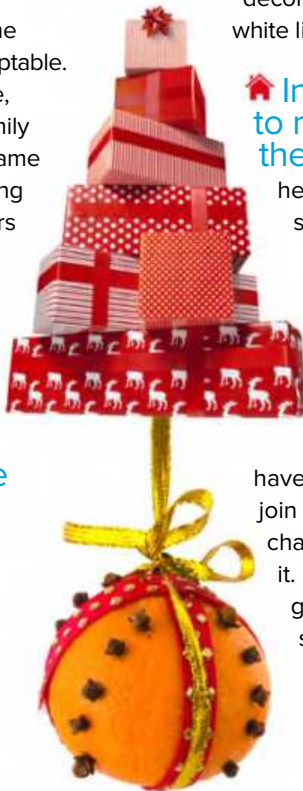
Photos: Nicky Johnston, Alamy, Getty Images Styling: Tess Wright Hair and make-up: Liz Kitchiner Sarah wears: Dress, Mary Portas at House of Fraser

🏠 We have our own special traditions that include having plastic bugs (such as flies, rats and cockroaches) that appear in people's food and make everyone squeal!

That came from my stepmother's family and I still love it. Father Christmas always wrapped each present when my mother was alive and he seems to do the same for my children, which is very kind of him even if it takes him a long time on Christmas Eve! He also visits the whole house, which makes Christmas morning very exciting as everyone wanders around in dressing gowns with party hats on, eating the satsuma that comes in the bottom of the stocking.

🏠 Personal touches are the key to decorating – too much good taste is, frankly, pretty ghastly! You need decorations to be a reflection of your family and this is the one time of year when going OTT is totally acceptable. When we first bought Rise Hall in Yorkshire, we had no decorations so we started a family rule that everyone – young or old – who came to stay or see us over Christmas had to bring a decoration for the tree. The result 15 years later is what I'd call 'eclectic', but every decoration has a story behind it, so opening the box every year is a delight.

🏠 I love festive decorations, but Christmas is about friends and family – it's not a competition to have a home that looks like a Selfridges window! It actually doesn't matter too much how your home looks at this time of year, I reckon, as the important thing is for everyone to feel included (yes, that means hanging the horrible paper chain produced by your nephew!). Memories are made not by the décor but by the people who share your home with you at this time of year.



🏠 The best home buy at Christmas?

You can get some really amazing battery-powered candles with lovely warm yellow light (rather than cool white). Some even flicker, so you can have the feeling of a Victorian Christmas – without the fire hazard! If you have an open fire, chuck on satsuma peel and the whole room will smell amazing.

🏠 My husband Graham has better taste than me and is a bit horrified by my desire to have flashing lights and tinsel everywhere.

So, to be honest, there's always a bit of a battle when it comes to Christmas styling. We do come to a compromise – the tree is stuffed with every decoration we can get our hands on (generally placed on by the kids, so the bottom branches are always heavily weighted) and several dozen tree chocolates, which rarely make it past Christmas Eve! The rest of the house is then decorated in a classical style, with lots of greenery, white lights and plain red and silver baubles.

🏠 In recent years, we've started to move our Christmas meal to the evening,

skipping lunch (after a very hearty breakfast). It works well for us as we spend time opening presents and playing with the children, rather than basting potatoes and shouting at them to get out of the way!

🏠 We have a large family and all our relatives have pretty big families

and we tend to all get together at Christmas. We also have a few very close family friends who often join us. My typical Christmas is, therefore, pretty chaotic and, honestly, that is the way I love it. My perfect day is filled with old-fashioned games, kids' performances, laughter and time spent catching up. The veggies are usually overcooked or lukewarm and there are often cheesy Wotsits instead of canapés but there are also plenty of Nerf guns and games of hide and seek. FABULOUS!

Prima promotion

Take a deep breath

Wish the air you breathe could always be this fresh? A new 100% natural purifying spray for your home can help keep coughs, wheezes and bugs at bay



A breath of fresh air is a tonic for body and mind, yet escaping environmental pollution gets more and more challenging. It's worrying to learn that in our homes, where we spend around 90% of our time, the air quality can be up to 100 times worse than outside*. Coughs, headaches and watering eyes can all be triggered by germs and dust mites in the atmosphere, not to mention more serious health problems such as allergies and asthma. Yet there could be a natural solution. The

blend of 41 natural essential oils in the new Purifying Air Spray from Puressentiel has been clinically proven to help clear the air of bacteria and viruses, microscopic fungi and dust mites – even clothes moths are kept at bay. For the past 10 years in its native France, family-owned Puressentiel has been the favourite natural expert, famous for its effective 100% plant-based solutions. Easily tolerated and safe for all the family, Purifying Air Spray can help keep your home pollution-free while smelling wonderfully fresh and clean.

Puressentiel Purifying Air Spray, £19.99, is available in larger Boots, Superdrug, Day Lewis and independent pharmacies. For more information, visit puressentiel.co.uk

The Purifying Air Spray can keep your home pollution-free and smelling fresh and clean



Looks and smells gorgeous!

WINTER WARMER

Three-wick candle scented with tonka bean and spices – lovely! **Winter Nights candle**, £14, Avon



Room fragrances

FRESH PRINTS

Orla Kiely's signature print looks fab and the diffuser smells divine. **Orange Rind diffuser**, £32, Orla Kiely



SHOW STOPPER

Enjoy the sweet smell of the season with this delightful **Winter Berries candle in a posy vase**, £42, Kenneth Turner



Scents of the season

Create a festive mood at home using candles and diffusers. They make really gorgeous gifts, too...

OLD SCHOOL GLAM

Pretty as a picture, this cedarwood and vanilla scented diffuser will charm everyone. **Ted Baker New York diffuser**, £35, House of Fraser



BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED

Give someone the gift of light (and colour!) with this **Kaffe Fassett candle**, £25, Heathcote & Ivory



WINTER WONDERLAND

Fill your home with an invigorating blend of evergreens, fir needle and spruce with this **Windsor Forest fragrance with bird-shaped diffuser**, £38, Crabtree & Evelyn



So pretty!

ELEGANT & CALMING

Fragranced with the festive scent of mandarin, orange and vanilla, this candle is lovely and soothing. **La Maison de Senteurs Vanille Epicee candle**, £7.50, Marks & Spencer



GOING FOR GOLD

Glitzy and strongly fragranced, this candle has added hints of cloves and cinnamon. **Holiday Hearth candle**, £38, Jonathan Adler





Style it, do it, love it!

1

2

A touch of glass

Glass cloches, domes and jars filled with nostalgic Christmas decorations are guaranteed to bring lots of seasonal cheer.



3

4



5

6



Trend to try!

1 Bell jar with festive house, £15, BHS 2 Christmas tree and deer, £19, Monsoon 3 Robin, £4, Sainsbury's 4 Snowy scene, £4.50, Next 5 Beaded tree in dome, £19.50, Marks & Spencer 6 Mini Santa, £4.50, John Lewis



KEEP COSY THIS SEASON

Winter can only mean one thing when it comes to bedlinen – cosy brushed cotton. Designed with a festive Scandi feel, this set is just the thing if you have friends staying in your spare room or it's perfect for those toasty holiday lie-ins. Brrring it on!

Fairisle print **bed set**, from £30 for a single; striped brushed cotton **sheet**, from £15 for a single; both Next



O' Christmas tree!

When it comes to artificial trees, there are some excellent novel buys to try...



Kaemingk Everlands Nobilis fir (6ft), £99.95, White Stores



Place on your tabletop

Mistletoe Christmas tree with robin, £14.95, Dotcomgiftshop



Aspen flocked (6ft), £45, Tesco



Unlikely to topple over!

Christmas tree in a crate, £50, Marks & Spencer

Style it... with Prima flowers

We're thrilled with the latest addition to our Prima flowers collection. Our gorgeous Christmas bouquet will bring instant festive elegance to your home, plus it makes a brilliant gift. Featuring creamy pink 'Upper Secret' roses, red leucadendron, white wax flowers and bronze-painted ruscus, as well as carnations and Lodge Pole fir, it will create a showstopping centrepiece. It's only £24.99 with free delivery. Order at flyingflowers.co.uk/prima or visit prima.co.uk/flowers



Vintage wooden **sleigh**, £99; industrial storage **trolley**, from £99, both Nordic House

Trend to try



SLEIGH HEY HEY!

Create a seasonal scene by displaying wrapped presents in a sleigh or metal basket. They will look fantastic under the tree or on the hearth.

Welcome wreaths

Whatever your style, there's one that's perfect for your home



Christmas **rag** wreath kit, £17.50, Clare Loves



Holly wreath, £19.99, Dobbies



Chintu **glass** garland with sari tie, £87, Idyll Home

One to treasure



Fiona Walker **felt** wreath £25, The Scandinavian Shop



Personalised **vinyl record** Christmas wreath, £27, Betsy Benn

Photo: Getty Images



This nine-crate arrangement is an amazing wooden alternative to a tree. And, after 25 December, you will have a fab set of crates for the garden. £199, Plantabox (decorations are not included)

Wow factor!

Slim (6ft), £20, Tesco

NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS

Shop smart with festive-feeling buys that will last beyond the season.



LEFT: Metallic hexagonal **lantern**, £22, BHS. ABOVE: Red **cushion**, £7.99, H&M



Looks fab hung with baubles

Rustic **frame** with five hooks, £12.99; natural wicker hanging **heart**, £4.99, both Homebase

To sign up for our fantastic free newsletter full of homes ideas and inspiration that you'll love, simply text your email address followed by PRIMA to 84499. Texts to this number are charged at your standard network rate, never more*.

*Standard network rates vary depending on your phone provider. By texting into this service, you are opting in to receive messages from us by email and SMS. You can opt out from SMS by texting STOP to 84499 and from email by clicking 'unsubscribe'.

Your perfect Christmas lunch

The ultimate festive menu for the big day is one that tastes sublime, looks sensational and is super simple to make. And here it is!

Christmas lunch menu

Starter

Mixed seafood platter

Mains

Turkey with sausage, date & clementine stuffing
OR

Squash, chestnut & cranberry Wellington (v)
OR

Stuffed salmon parcel with spinach & mushrooms

Sides

Buttery glazed carrots

Roasted Brussels sprouts & shallots

Maple syrup & thyme parsnips

Ultimate roasties

Cider-braised red cabbage

Maple syrup & sage pigs in blankets

Bread sauce

Cumberland sauce

Desserts

Delia's Mini Christmas puddings

Your handy timetable

Prepare ahead and delegate what you can – that way, you'll enjoy the main event as much as everyone else!

A FEW DAYS BEFORE

(as these taste better made ahead)

- Make Cumberland sauce (p137) and red cabbage (p135); cover both and put in fridge.
- Prepare veggie Wellington, if serving (p139); store in fridge unbaked or make earlier and freeze.

CHRISTMAS EVE

- Prepare stuffing for salmon, if serving.
- Peel potatoes; peel and scrub carrots; peel and chop parsnips (leave all covered in water in pan).
- Prep bread sauce; leave onion steeping in milk in fridge and prepare breadcrumbs.
- Prepare stuffing and pigs in blankets (leave covered in fridge).
- Prepare shallots and sprouts.

ON THE DAY (for lunch at 2pm)

- **9am** Stuff the turkey. Sit it in roasting tin, ready to go. Preheat oven to hot.
- **9.30am to 10am** Put turkey in oven (depends on size; calculate using the grid on p133). Remember, it can come out and rest for an hour before serving.
- **10.30am** Set the table.
- **11am** Make bread sauce and keep in pan on hob – top up with more milk when ready to reheat.
- **12pm** Arrange uncooked fish on platter.
- **12.30pm to 12.45pm** Take the turkey out, when cooked, and cover with foil.
- Cook carrots, then leave in cold water.
- Put roast potatoes in oven.
- Make gravy (leave in pan on hob so can be reheated when ready to serve).
- **1pm** Put the parsnips and the pigs in blankets in the oven.

- Cook prawns, put on dish and cover.
- **1.15pm** Put sprouts and onions in oven.
- Put veggie Wellington and/or stuffed salmon parcel in oven, if serving.
- Warm serving dishes. Take Cumberland sauce out of fridge and put on table.
- **1.45pm** Take out roasties, parsnips, sprouts and sausages from oven, put in serving bowls and keep warm.
- Drain carrots and finish off in pan.
- Reheat red cabbage in microwave then transfer to serving dish.
- Heat bread sauce; put in serving dish.
- **1.50pm** Open the Champagne and serve with the fish platter. Turn off oven.
- **2pm** Now it's time to eat! Take turkey to table to carve and get someone to take out the veggies while you tend to the bread sauce and gravy, making sure it's all piping hot. Bon appétit!

Mixed seafood platter

A fresh and light starter to kick off the meal.

SERVES 8 PREP: 15 mins COOK: 10 mins

- 2tbsp olive oil
 - 2 x 200g packs raw prawns
 - Handful of flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
 - About 16 large raw prawns, shells on
 - 2 x 80g packs crayfish tails
 - 2 x 120g packs smoked salmon
 - Lemon wedges, for serving
 - Cocktail sticks, for serving
- FOR THE MARIE ROSE SAUCE:
- 200g jar mayonnaise
 - 4tbsp ketchup
 - Splash of Worcestershire sauce
 - 1tbsp brandy
 - Pinch of paprika, plus extra for topping
 - Juice of ½ lemon

• First, make the sauce: add all ingredients to a bowl and mix well until

pink. Season and taste. Cover and put in the fridge until required. Serve at room temperature.

• For the platter, heat half the oil in a large frying pan, add smaller prawns, season and add parsley. Cook for 2 mins until pink then remove and put aside. Wipe out the pan, heat remaining oil and, when hot, add the large prawns. Cook for a few mins, turning until all pink. Remove and put aside.

• To serve, arrange prawns, crayfish and smoked salmon on a serving platter and garnish with lemon wedges. Place the bowl of Marie Rose sauce on to the platter and scatter with a pinch of paprika. Serve on its own or with finely sliced, buttered brown bread. Don't forget cocktail sticks, so guests can help themselves. ➔



Turkey with sausage, date & clementine stuffing

The utterly delicious stuffing really complements the succulent turkey.

SERVES 8-10 (with leftovers) PREP: 20 mins COOK: About 3 hrs 30 mins

- About 5kg/11lb 2oz free-range turkey (we used one from Copas Traditional Turkeys)
- 2 onions, peeled and quartered
- 2 or 3 clementines, halved
- 250g pack butter, roughly cut up
- 4 or 5 rosemary stalks, leaves picked and finely chopped
- Generous pinch of sea salt
- Bunch of watercress, for garnish (optional)
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 220g pack streaky bacon, chopped into small pieces
- 6-8 good quality pork sausages, skinned
- 2 x 250g bags dates, stoned and chopped
- 350g/12oz white breadcrumbs
- Generous pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
- Few sage leaves, finely chopped
- Zest of 2 clementines

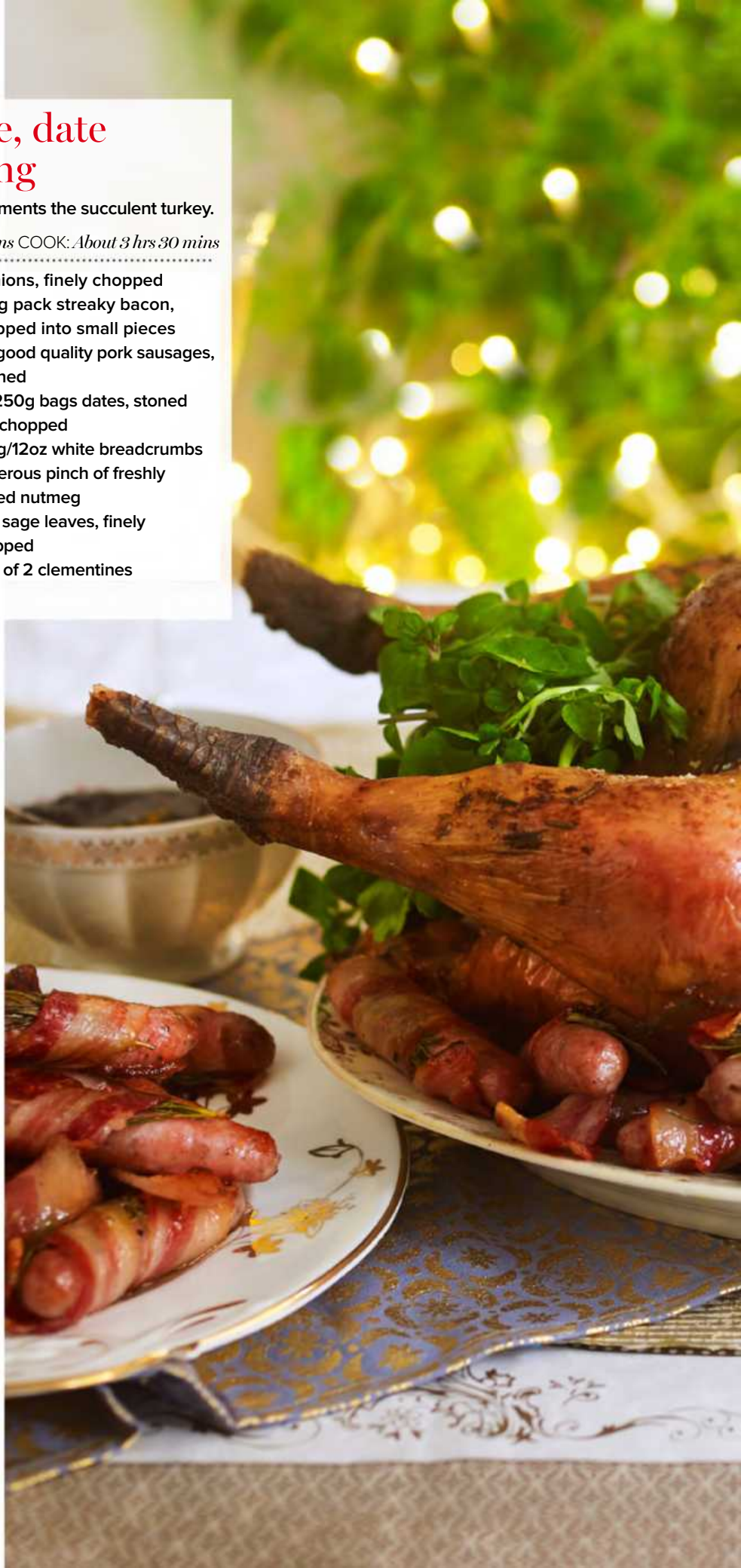
FOR THE STUFFING:

- 1tbsp olive oil

● Preheat oven to gas mark 7/220°C (200°C in a fan oven). To prepare the stuffing, heat the oil in a large frying pan, add onions, season and cook for 2 to 3 mins until soft. Add bacon pieces and cook for 5 mins until bacon is cooked. Remove pan from heat, transfer onion mixture to a bowl and leave to cool. When cold, add sausage meat, dates and breadcrumbs, then stir in the nutmeg, sage and clementine zest and season. If you want to test the stuffing now, heat a little oil in pan, add a spoonful and cook for about 5 or 6 mins until golden.

● Sit the turkey in a large roasting tin then stuff the body with the onions and clementines. Now, stuff the turkey neck with stuffing mixture, pushing it in, so the turkey is plump. Then, with clean hands, smooth and shape the turkey. Dot butter all over and massage it into skin. Sprinkle with rosemary and salt.

● Put turkey in oven for 30 mins until golden, then baste with the buttery juices. Turn the oven down to gas mark 5/190°C (170°C in a fan oven), cover turkey loosely with foil and cook for a further 2 to 2½ hrs (see opposite page for cooking times), basting with the juices occasionally. It's ready if the juices run clear when the thickest part is poked with a knife. If not ready, cook for a further 10 mins, then check again. Remove from oven, keep warm and cover loosely with foil and tea towels. It can rest now for at least 45 mins while you cook the veggies. To serve, garnish with a bunch of watercress.



Choosing your turkey

What size turkey?

Aim for about 500g/1lb 2oz of meat (on the bone) per person. You'll have plenty of leftovers – ideal for Boxing Day.

Turkey weight: Feeds:

4kg/9lb	6-8
5kg/11lb 2oz	10
6kg/13.5lb	12

Don't want to cook a whole turkey?

Choose a turkey crown (no wings or legs) as it can still feed the crowds,

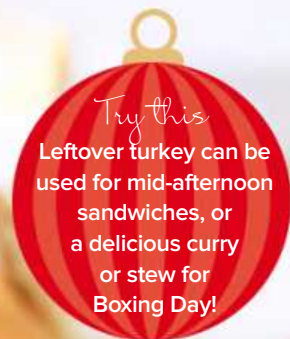
if you opt for a large one. Cook as per a whole turkey, adjusting times as required. Crowns take up less room in the fridge and oven, are easier to handle and carve and there's less waste. They still make a great centrepiece.

How to cook the perfect turkey

To calculate the cooking times, for a turkey weighing less than 4kg/9lb, it's 20 mins per kg plus a further 70 mins. If it weighs more than 4kg, it's 20 mins per kg plus a further 90 mins.

The gravy...

Skim away fat from roasting tin, then sit it on top of hob on a gentle heat and let it bubble, scraping away bits from the bottom. Add a large glass of white wine (250ml/9fl oz) and a spoonful of redcurrant jelly, increase heat and let it bubble some more. To thicken, if needed, mix a little flour with water and stir this in; slowly add hot water or vegetable water, stirring until you get your preferred thickness. Season well, sieve and transfer to a gravy boat when ready to serve. Make sure it's piping hot! ➔



Buttery glazed carrots

A gorgeous glaze brings carrots to life.

SERVES 8 PREP: 15 mins COOK: 15 mins

- About 800g/1lb 7oz carrots with leafy tops, trimmed, scrubbed or peeled (leave some tops intact)
- Large knob of butter
- 2-3tsp sugar
- Add carrots to a pan of boiling, salted water and cook for 10 to 12 mins, or until just tender. Then, drain well, rinse in cold water (this will help to retain the colour) and put aside. While carrots are cooking, melt butter and sugar in a large shallow pan. Drain carrots and finish off in the pan (so they are coated in butter and are hot). Transfer to a serving dish.

Roasted Brussels sprouts & shallots

A great combo of sweet and slightly bitter flavours.

SERVES 8 PREP: 10 mins COOK: 30 mins

- 700g/1½lb Brussels sprouts, outer leaves removed (use fresh or frozen, defrosted)
- 2 x 400g bags shallots, peeled
- 1-2tbsp olive oil
- Preheat oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). Add sprouts and shallots to a large roasting tin, add the oil, toss well to coat, then season. Put in oven and roast for 25 to 30 mins (frozen sprouts will cook much quicker). When done, remove from oven and transfer to a serving dish.

Maple syrup & thyme parsnips

It wouldn't be Christmas without parsnips and these are made extra special with maple syrup!

SERVES 8 PREP: 15 mins COOK: 40 mins

- 900g/2lb large parsnips, scrubbed or peeled, quartered lengthways
- Drizzle of olive oil
- Handful of thyme leaves
- Generous drizzle of maple syrup

- Preheat oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). Lay out parsnips in a large roasting tin, season well, drizzle over the oil and sprinkle with thyme leaves then toss together to coat. Put in the oven for about 30 mins, or until just starting to turn golden, then drizzle over the maple syrup, shake tin and put back in oven for a further 5 to 6 mins, or until golden brown and crisp. Transfer to a serving dish.



Ultimate roasties

Golden roast potatoes really make the meal.

SERVES 8 PREP: 15 mins COOK: 1 hr

- 2.5kg bag floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper, peeled and halved or quartered into even sizes
- 1tbsp flour
- About 125g/4oz goose fat, or use rapeseed oil, if you prefer

● Preheat the oven to gas mark 7/220°C (200°C in a fan oven). Cook potatoes in a pan of salted water for 5 to 8 mins until just tender, then drain well and tip them back into the pan. Cover with lid and sit on top of unheated hob to dry out. Shake flour over the potatoes, sit a lid on the pan and gently shake

so potatoes are coated (this is how you get a crispy outer).

● Add fat or oil to a large roasting tin and put it in oven until very hot. Remove, then carefully add potatoes, coating in fat or oil as you go. Be careful as it will hiss and spit. Sprinkle with sea salt and put in the oven to cook for about 40 to 50 mins until golden and crisp (you can give them a shake halfway, if needed). Remove and transfer to a serving dish.

Cider-braised red cabbage

Gorgeous notes of sweet and sour – just lovely.

SERVES 8 PREP: 10 mins COOK: 1 hr

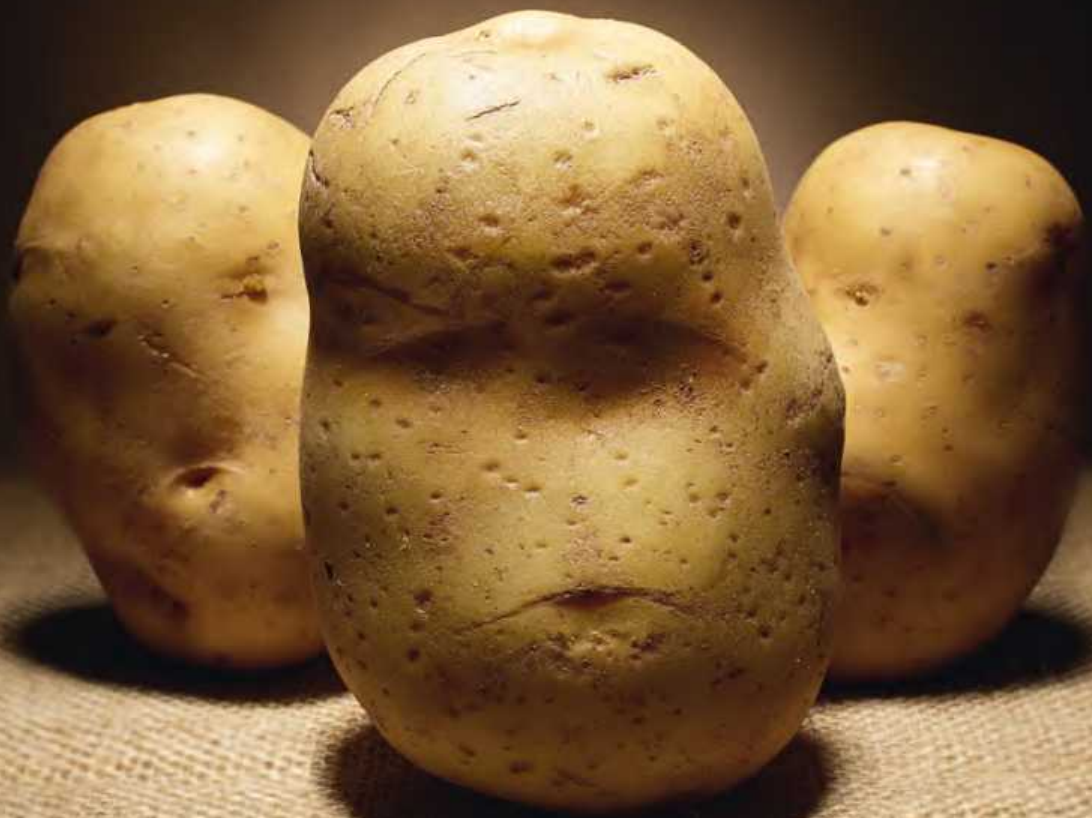
- 1 large red cabbage, halved and shredded
- About 300ml/10fl oz dry cider (you may need more)
- 3tbsp cider vinegar
- Pinch of mixed spice
- Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
- About 1-2tbsp soft brown sugar

● Add cabbage to a large heavy-based pan (a cast-iron one is good) season well then add the cider, vinegar, spices and sugar. Stir well then cook on low heat with lid ajar for about 1 hr, stirring occasionally. Top up with cider if it starts to dry out. Transfer to a serving dish. ➔



Prepare ahead

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KIND OF POTATO
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dishes provide a tasty change and help you to just
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Maple syrup & sage pigs in blankets

Succulent wrapped sausages are utterly moreish, so make plenty!

SERVES 6-8 PREP: 5 mins
COOK: 40 mins

- Rosemary leaves for each sausage
- About 24 chipolatas
- 250g pack streaky bacon, trimmed and cut into strips lengthways
- Drizzle of olive oil
- Drizzle of maple syrup
- Preheat the oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). Lay a few rosemary leaves on top of each sausage, then wrap each one in bacon. Oil a large tin and place the sausages inside, neatly side by side. Cook for about 30 mins, or until just turning golden. Then, drizzle with maple syrup and cook for about 10 mins until golden brown and sticky. Transfer to a serving dish or serve around the turkey.

Bread sauce

The perfect accompaniment to turkey – and this is so easy to make.

SERVES 8 PREP: 15 mins, plus infusing COOK: 25 mins

- 1 onion, peeled, halved and studded with cloves
- About 1.4 litres/2½pt milk, plus extra, if needed
- 1 bay leaf, plus extra, to serve
- 225g/8oz white breadcrumbs (about ½ loaf whizzed in food processor)
- 100ml/3½fl oz double cream (optional)
- Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
- Sit onion in a pan with milk and one bay leaf. Bring to boil, remove from heat and put aside to infuse (overnight, if you can). Strain milk into a clean pan, bring to boil and stir in breadcrumbs. Reduce to a simmer and cook gently, stirring occasionally. Cook for 10 to 15 mins until thickened, top up with milk, if needed, and stir in cream, if using. Season and stir in nutmeg. Transfer to a dish and garnish with extra bay leaves.

Cumberland sauce

An English classic that tastes divine.

SERVES 8 PREP: 15 mins
COOK: 30 mins

- 2 oranges, thinly peeled with a vegetable peeler and zest cut into fine strips, then juiced
- 1 lemon, thinly peeled with a vegetable peeler and zest cut into fine strips, then juiced
- Small knob of butter
- 1 shallot, peeled and finely chopped
- 5cm/2in piece of ginger, peeled and grated
- 125ml/4fl oz port
- 1tsp English mustard
- About 5tbsp redcurrant jelly
- Put all zest in a bowl, cover with boiling water and leave for 1 min. Remove with slotted spoon and put in cold water. Drain and put aside. Heat butter in a pan, add shallot and ginger; cook for 2 to 3 mins until soft. Add port, all juice and mustard. Bring to boil then simmer for 20 mins, stir in jelly and heat until it melts. Pass through a sieve, pour into a jug and add lemon and orange zest. ➔



Try this
Make a Boxing Day bubble and squeak by frying any leftover meat and veg in a little oil. Serve with cranberry sauce.



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Squash, chestnut & cranberry Wellington

Prepare ahead

Vegetarians will love this – it's so delicious, the meat eaters will want a slice, too!

SERVES 8 PREP: 20 mins
COOK: 1 hr 15 mins

- 1 butternut squash, halved, peeled, deseeded and cubed
- 2tbsp olive oil
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- Few rosemary leaves, finely chopped
- 300g pack mushrooms, chopped
- 25g/1oz dried porcini mushrooms (soaked in boiling water for 30 mins), chopped
- Splash of dry sherry
- 200g pack ready-cooked chestnuts, chopped
- 500g ready-bought puff pastry (there will be some left over)
- Flour, for dusting
- About 2tbsp cranberry sauce
- 1 egg, for glazing
- Bay leaves, rosemary and fresh cranberries, for garnish (optional)
- Preheat oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). First, make the filling: add butternut squash to a large roasting tin, season well and toss with half the oil. Put in oven for 20 to 30 mins until tender and just starting to colour around the edges. Remove and put to one side.
- While that's cooking, heat remaining oil in a large pan, add the onion, season well and cook for 2 to 3 mins to soften. Add garlic and rosemary and cook for 1 min then add the mushrooms and cook for 5 to 6 mins until soft. Increase the heat and add sherry, bubble for 1 min then stir in chestnuts and cook for a few mins more. Taste and season, if needed. Remove from heat and put aside to cool.
- Roll out pastry on a floured board to a large rectangle about 30x40cm (12x16in). Then spoon mushroom filling on to pastry, leaving an edge all the way around. Top with the squash along the middle and dot with cranberry sauce. Moisten pastry edges with water

then bring the edges up together and seal, tucking in like a parcel. Carefully roll the Wellington on to a baking sheet, seal-side down, and brush all over with egg. Put in the oven and bake for about 40 to 45

mins, or until golden and puffed. If it browns too much, cover loosely with foil. Remove from oven and transfer to a serving plate. Garnish with bay leaves, rosemary and cranberries, if using, and slice to serve. ➔



RESCUING *the* BLAND



Stuffed salmon parcel with spinach & mushrooms

This makes a fab alternative to traditional turkey, or a fantastic centrepiece for Boxing Day with the leftover veggies.

SERVES 8-10 PREP: 20 mins

COOK: 50 mins

- 2 salmon sides, with skin (about 700g/1½lb) (ask the fishmonger for the chunky end – you can choose how large you want it, depending on how many you are feeding)
- Drizzle of olive oil
- 2 lemons, some sliced and some cut into wedges
- 2 fennel bulbs, trimmed and sliced lengthways

FOR THE STUFFING:

- 1tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 300g pack mushrooms, chopped

- Few stalks of dill, leaves finely chopped
- Few fresh thyme stalks, leaves finely chopped

- 500g bag spinach leaves, roughly chopped, or use watercress

YOU WILL NEED: string (optional)

- Preheat oven to gas mark 5/190°C (170°C in a fan oven). First, make the stuffing: heat the oil in a large frying pan, add the onion and season. Cook for 2 to 3 mins until soft then stir in the garlic and cook for 1 min. Stir in mushrooms, herbs and spinach and heat until leaves wilt. Put aside to cool.
- Trim the tail, if needed (you can bag and freeze this for a fish pie). Score the skin of each salmon side and sprinkle

with sea salt. Sit one side skin-down in a large roasting tin, spread with mushroom mixture then top with the other piece, skin-side up. Tie up with string, if using, then drizzle with the oil, sit lemon slices and wedges on top and scatter the fennel pieces around the fish.

- Cover loosely with foil and put in oven for 25 to 40 mins, or until fish is opaque and cooked all the way through (the time will vary depending on the thickness of the salmon). Be careful not to overcook, as it will continue to cook as you remove it from the oven and leave it covered in foil. Let it rest for 10 to 15 mins before transferring it to a serving platter. Slice to serve.



Delia's *really easy* festive finale

Fabulous Christmas pudding and delicious sauces to accompany it can be really easy to make – take it from Delia Smith!



Christmas rum sauce

SERVES 8

75g butter
60g plain flour
570ml Channel
Island or whole milk
50g caster sugar
4–5 tablespoons
dark rum (or more)
1 tablespoon double
cream

Place 60g of the butter in a saucepan with 60g flour, pour in the milk, then, using a balloon whisk, whisk everything vigorously together over a medium heat. As soon as it comes to simmering point and has thickened, turn the heat right down to its lowest setting, stir in the sugar and let the sauce cook for 10 minutes. After that, add the rum and the cream. Pour the hot sauce into a jug and dot the remaining butter over the top of the hot sauce, then cover the surface with clingfilm and keep warm until required and whisk before serving.



Cumberland rum or brandy butter

SERVES 8

175g unsalted butter, at room temperature
175g soft dark brown sugar
6 tablespoons rum or brandy

You can either blend the butter and sugar together till pale, soft and creamy in a food processor or else use an electric hand whisk. When you have a pale smooth mixture you can gradually add the rum or brandy a little at a time, beating well after each addition. Taste and add more rum or brandy if you think it needs it! Then place the butter in a container and chill thoroughly before serving. It is important, I think, to serve this very cold, so that it can provide a wonderful contrast to the hot mince pies or pudding. It will keep for 2–3 weeks in the fridge, so it's not really worth freezing.

Mini Christmas puddings

SERVES 4

These are made in moments and are made with mincemeat and cooked in less than an hour, are light-textured but have all the flavours of Christmas. You don't have to make them at the last minute – they freeze beautifully and reheat like a dream. Serve with Christmas rum sauce (see left) or Cumberland rum or brandy butter (see below left).

200g mincemeat
60g self-raising flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ rounded teaspoon ground
mixed spice
1 medium egg
25g softened butter
40ml black treacle
55ml Irish stout
1 tablespoon dark rum
40g Bramley apple, peeled,
cored and finely diced
10g roasted chopped hazelnuts
75g currants
the grated zest of ½ orange
the grated zest of ½ lemon
1 tablespoon brandy, if flaming
the puddings
Four 175ml mini non-stick
pudding basins, well buttered,
a small shallow roasting tin,
some baking parchment
and foil

Preheat the oven to 180°C/ gas mark 4. First sift the flour, baking powder and mixed spice into a medium mixing bowl, then add the egg and softened butter. After that, measure the treacle into a glass measuring jug, add the stout and rum and mix these together. Next pour this mixture into the bowl and, using an electric hand whisk, whisk everything very thoroughly together.

Now add the apple, nuts, currants, mincemeat and, finally, the grated orange and lemon zests. Then mix everything together very thoroughly, and divide the mixture among the 4 well-buttered pudding basins. Top each with a small circle of buttered baking parchment, followed by an 18cm square of foil large enough to fold under the edges of the basins, making a pleat all the way round to seal. Now place the basins in the tin and pour in 2.5cm of boiling water from the kettle, then place the tin in the oven and leave to cook for 45–50 minutes, or until the puddings are springy and firm to the touch in the centre. Then remove them from the oven, remove the foil and baking parchment and let them stand for 10 minutes before carefully running a small knife around each one to turn them out on to warm serving plates.

If you want to flame the puddings, this is very easy to do and it's guaranteed to impress your guests. Firstly line the puddings up on a warm serving platter, then warm the brandy in a metal ladle over direct heat and, as soon as the brandy is hot, turn out the flame and



ask someone to set light to it using a long match. Place the ladle now gently flaming over one of the puddings – but don't pour the brandy over until you reach the table. (If you don't have

a gas hob, warm the brandy in a small saucepan.) When you do, pour it slowly over all the puddings and watch them flame to the cheers of the assembled company.



Extracted from Delia's Happy Christmas, published by Ebury Press at £25. Copyright © Delia Smith, 2009. Photography © Petrina Tinslay



Festive treats

Mary Berry's *Divine* BOOZY DESSERTS



'Tis the season to be merry with Mary Berry's simple yet stunning grown-up puds



Did you know?

Cape gooseberries are also called physalis and Chinese lanterns. They are small golden berries with a thin papery husk which for decoration is folded back; they are most attractive and delicious to eat.

Vodka trifle with cherries and orange

This trifle is very colourful as well as delicious. It is best made the day before, so that the flavours have time to develop.

SERVES 6-8

- 1 x 250g (9 oz) tub mascarpone cheese, at room temperature
- 4 tablespoons vodka
- finely grated zest of 2 oranges
- 300ml (½ pint) double cream, lightly whisked
- 12 – 16 trifle sponges
- ⅔ x 600g (1 lb 5 oz) jar Bonne Maman cherry compote
- 3 oranges, peeled and segmented
- 8 Cape gooseberries to decorate
- icing sugar

● Measure the mascarpone, vodka and half the orange zest into a mixing bowl. Add the cream a little at a time to the cheese, beating well until smooth.

● Split the trifle sponges horizontally.

● Spread half of the cheese mixture across the bottom of a round 26cm (10½ in) shallow glass dish. Arrange half of the split sponges on the cheese mixture and press down gently. (The number of sponges you use will vary with the size of the dish you have.) Spoon the cherry compote on top, spreading right to the edges of the bowl. Arrange the orange segments on top and the remaining trifle sponges on the fruit. Spread the remaining cheese mixture over the surface.

● Scatter the reserved orange zest over the trifle, cover with clingfilm and leave in the fridge for the sponges to soak, ideally overnight.

● The next day, arrange the Cape gooseberries around the edge. Dust with a little icing sugar just before serving.

Preparing ahead This must be made a day in advance.



Mincemeat bread and butter pudding

This is wonderful at any time of the year, not just at Christmas! It is essential to make it in a shallow dish so that you get maximum crunchy top. It rises like a soufflé, so serve at once straight from the oven.

SERVES 6-8

- 50g (2 oz) ready-to-eat dried apricots
- 2 tablespoons brandy or rum
- 12 thin slices white bread, buttered
- 1 x 450g (1 lb) jar luxury mincemeat
- 50g (2 oz) caster sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 300ml (½ pint) double cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 150ml (¼ pint) milk
- 1 tablespoon Demerara sugar

● Well butter a 28cm (11 in) fairly shallow round china ovenproof dish. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4.

● Snip the apricots into smallish pieces and soak in the brandy or rum while making the pudding.

● Make sandwiches of the bread using

the mincemeat, but don't fill right to the edges because these are trimmed off. Cut off the crusts and cut each sandwich diagonally into four. Arrange the sandwich triangles across the dish, slightly overlapping.

● Beat together the caster sugar, eggs, cream and vanilla extract. Stir in the milk.

● Scatter the apricots over the bread.

Gradually pour over the cream mixture, making sure all the bread is coated. If you have time, leave the pudding to stand for 30–60 minutes (to allow the bread to absorb the liquid, so it becomes light and crisp during cooking). If you have no time, don't worry – you can still bake it straightaway.

● Sprinkle the Demerara sugar over the top of the pudding, and bake in the preheated oven for about 40 minutes until well risen, crisp and golden. Serve warm with crème fraîche or cream.

Preparing ahead Complete to the end of step 5 up to 12 hours ahead, cover with clingfilm and leave in the fridge. Continue with step 6. ➔



Brandy ice cream



This ice cream does not need a second whisking, so is very quick and easy. It is very good with mince pies and tarts – and delicious with the classic Christmas pudding instead of brandy butter. It contains raw egg yolks, so is not suitable for pregnant ladies or the very young or elderly.

SERVES 8

- 4 eggs, separated
- 100g (4 oz) caster sugar
- 300ml (½ pint) double cream
- 4 tablespoons brandy
- Whisk the egg whites on fast speed, using an electric hand whisk, until light and stiff. Beat in the sugar, still on a fast speed, a little at a time until you have a thick glossy meringue. Fold in the egg yolks.
- Whisk the cream and brandy together until thick. Fold into the meringue mixture.
- Freeze in a flat plastic box overnight, for at least 12 hours.

Preparing ahead Freeze for up to 1 month.



Recipes extracted from *Mary Berry's Christmas Collection*, published by Headline, £20.

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Lucy didn't want a
single thing for Christmas
(She wanted a Spiralizer,
Perfect Porridge Mug,
Coffee Machine,
Champagne Truffles...)



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AFTERNOON *delights!*



For those peckish moments
between lunch and dinner,
serve family and friends a
slice of home-made Christmas
cake and a mince pie. Mmm!



Cute holly & robin Christmas cake

Add the perfect iced finish to your Prima Cherry brandy cake. This looks fantastic!

SERVES 12-14 PREP: 40 mins, plus drying

- Icing sugar, sifted, for dusting
- 1kg block ready-to-roll marzipan (there will be some left over)
- 20.5cm/8in deep round fruit cake (see our Christmas cake recipe, Prima November 2015, page 142)
- About 3tbsp apricot jam, warmed and sieved, for glazing
- 1kg pack ready-to-roll white fondant icing (there will be some left over)
- 200g pack green sugar paste
- 1 egg white, or use edible glue
- 20g tube gold glitter icing

YOU WILL NEED: Gold cake board, 1m of gold and green ribbon, large and small holly leaf plunge cutters, robin decoration (found in cake decoration shops), icing smoother (optional)

✿ Dust your worktop with icing sugar, cut marzipan in half, kneading a little to soften, then roll it out (not too thin) so it's just larger than the cake. Brush top of cake with apricot glaze then turn it upside down on top of the marzipan and press to secure. Cut marzipan around cake, leaving about 2.5cm/1in, then, using a palette knife, nudge marzipan to cake to make a neat edge. Turn cake right way up.

✿ On a dusted worktop, roll out remaining marzipan (not too thin) wide enough and long enough to go around cake. Brush cake sides with glaze, then wrap with marzipan. Neaten top with knife, then smooth top and sides with hands (or an icing smoother, if using). Leave to dry out, overnight if you have time.

✿ Roll out icing so it's large enough to cover cake, brush marzipan with water then, using rolling pin, lift up icing and drape over cake. Smooth it out with your hands (or with icing smoother) and trim at the base. Wrap ribbons around cake. On a dusted worktop, roll out green sugar paste and cut out 12 large holly leaves and 8 small ones. Sit them on top of cake, well spaced, then secure with egg white (or edible glue). Using gold glitter icing, make two small dots at base of each holly leaf for berries. Sit robin in middle, then put cake to one side to dry out completely before serving.



Teatime treats

Moreish mince pies

With crisp pastry and a rich filling, these will be gone in a flash!

MAKES 12 PREP: 20 mins

COOK: 25 to 30 mins

- 225g/8oz plain flour
- 125g/4oz cold butter, cubed (or swap flour and butter for 500g pack ready-bought shortcrust pastry)
- Flour, for dusting
- About ¾ of 411g jar good quality mincemeat (mix in a little brandy, if you like)
- Icing sugar, for dusting

YOU WILL NEED: A medium deep-sized 12-hole muffin tin, lightly greased with butter; 7.5cm/3in and 5cm/2in round fluted cutters; a small star cutter

✿ Heat oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). Make the pastry: add flour and a pinch of salt to a large bowl. Add butter and rub into flour using your fingertips until it resembles breadcrumbs. Trickle in ice-cold water pulling mixture in until

it comes together as a dough. Turn out on to a lightly floured board and knead into a flat disc shape. Cover with cling film and chill for 20 mins.

✿ When ready to bake, remove pastry from fridge, halve it and roll out one half on to a lightly floured board. Using the larger cutter, press out 12 rounds then gently press them into each hole of the tin. Spoon a generous portion of mincemeat into each one.

✿ Roll out other half of pastry and any remaining bits. Cut out tops using the star cutter and the smaller round cutter. Press out some stars in the centres of the rounds. Wet the edge of each pie, then gently press the tops and stars on to the mincemeat and brush with egg wash.

✿ Chill in the fridge for 20 mins, if you have time, or put straight in the oven and bake for 20 to 30 mins until golden. Remove and leave to cool slightly, then release using a round-ended knife and sit them on a wire rack to cool. Alternatively, serve warm, dusted with plenty of sifted icing sugar, and a dollop of cream. Delish!

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We've tasted and tested what's in store this season so you can buy with confidence, knowing you're offering guests the most delicious treats around

Nibbles & starters

PARTY BITES



10 Mini Lobster Mac and Cheeses, £10 for 226g, Marks & Spencer. This 'posh' macaroni cheese is simply heavenly. Rich, full of flavour and gone in two mouthfuls!



Specially Selected Premium Duck Selection, £1.99 for 240g, Aldi. 12 Mouth-watering nibbles of duck straws and dim sum that aren't too greasy. Comes in a prawn selection, too.



Chorizo Sliders, £3.50 for 285g, Sainsbury's. Certain to get a 'wow', these mini sliders are stacked with salty Manchego cheese and a sweet red pepper relish.



12 Cheese Cannolis, £5.99 for 200g, Waitrose. Super tasty meat-free spinach and tomato pastries filled with a mix of melting cheeses. So moreish, they'll be gone in one bite!

SMOKED SALMON & FISH



Maple Smoked Salmon, £4.50 for 100g, Marks & Spencer. Gorgeous balance of salt and smoky flavours, with a lovely soft texture. And the maple syrup isn't overly sweet.



Christmas Spice Scottish Smoked Salmon, £4.99 for 100g, Waitrose. This salmon has all the flavours and scents of Christmas, from cinnamon and ginger to allspice and orange zest. Enjoy for breakfast with a glass of bubbly!



Finest Prawn Platter with dip, £10 for 420g, Tesco. Succulent prawns with a seafood dip – a delicious, hassle-free, easy-to-serve starter. Just what you need for the busy festive period.



Salmon Pearls, £6 for 2, Marks & Spencer. Presented in lovely shells, these smoked salmon bites are very impressive to serve on Christmas Day. The salmon is paired with a lemon mousse, fresh samphire and a dusting of silver lustre.

Meat & sides

TURKEYS & HAMS



Finest Christmas Pudding Glazed Ham, £7 for 500g, Tesco. Add a bit of fun to the table with this Christmas pud-shaped ham with tasty fruity glaze. Good value, too.



Finest British Free-Range Bronze Easy-Carve Turkey with gluten-free bacon and caramelised red onion chutney stuffing, maple glaze and black pepper star butter, £45 for 3kg, Tesco. A great choice for 10 to 12 people.



Spruce Smoked Gammon with a mincemeat stuffing and ginger glaze, £13.99 for 1.32kg, Heston from Waitrose. Something a little different with unusual flavours. Tender and easy to carve – makes tasty Boxing Day sandwiches.



Take some of the stress out of the busy festive season and book a December home delivery slot from the supermarkets today!



Taste the Difference British Free-Range Bronze Turkey Breast Joint with a British pork, chestnut and bacon stuffing and a bacon lattice, £35 for 1.18kg, Sainsbury's. A smaller joint with gorgeous stuffing that marries well with the turkey meat. The layer of bacon helps to keep the meat moist and juicy.

VEGGIE OPTIONS



Signature Christmas Jewelled Mushroom Bake, £5 for 500g, Morrisons. A tasty mix of rice and pearl barley with squash, mushrooms and cranberries. Wonderfully colourful and delicious.



Specially Selected Mushroom, Brie and Cranberry Wellington, £2.99 for 400g, Aldi. A substantial pastry for Christmas lunch that's easy to cook and has plenty of gutsy flavours.

BITS ON THE SIDE



Truly Irresistible Sage and Shallot Stuffing with jewelled fruit, chestnuts and a cranberry and ruby port glaze, £6 for 630g, Co-op. Fabulous intense flavours that will complement lunch so well.



Taste the Difference Celeriac Dauphinoise, £4 for 600g, Sainsbury's. Celeriac is layered with potato and cream to make a sumptuous side. Delish!



Cauliflower Cheese and Truffle, £3.49 for 600g, Aldi. Truffle adds a subtle earthy flavour and turns this side dish into something truly special.

Sweets & treats

CHRISTMAS CAKES, PUDDINGS & MINCE PIES

Specially Selected Golden-Topped Christmas Pudding, £9.99 (970g), Aldi.

This impressive pudding tastes just as good as home-made and has a nice balance of brandy and port.



Taste the Difference Ecclefechan Mincemeat Tarts, £2.50 for 4, Sainsbury's.

These Scottish tarts are filled with vine fruit, cherries and almonds and have a great chewy texture. Fab with cream.



Taste the Difference Golden Bow Cake, £18 for 1.7kg, Sainsbury's. Packed with chunky fruit and soured in Cognac, this exquisite cake has a lovely texture that's not too crumbly.



Spiced Shortcrust Mince Pies, £3.50 for 6, Heston from Waitrose. Christmas flavours packed into lattice-topped pies with almonds, spices and tangerine sugar, for dusting.



Luxury Hand Crafted Mince Pies, £2.99 for 6, Aldi. Lighter than a classic mince pie with great pastry and a tasty almond topping. Packed full of juicy fruit. Tasty hot or cold.



Hand-Decorated Falling Star Cake, £20 for 1.46kg, Marks & Spencer. With generous amounts of fruit, marzipan and booze, this cake almost looks too good to slice!



Stollen Cake, £1.70 for 450g, Morrisons. Baked in store, this cake is packed with plump vine fruit and has a subtle marzipan flavour, but is not overly sweet. Great dough texture.

4 GLUTEN-FREE MUST-BUYS!



Italian Chocolate Panettone, £9.50 for 600g, Coori. There's no need to miss out on this Italian Christmas classic if you're on a gluten-free diet!



Finest Gluten-Free Christmas Pudding, £1.75 for 100g, Tesco. A nicely textured pud that's rich in fruit and made with gluten-free breadcrumbs.



Gluten-Free Christmas Cake with sultanas, raisins, cherries and dates, £3.50 for 330g, Waitrose. You'd never know this cute cake was gluten free.



Gluten-Free Mince Pies, £2 for 4, Tesco. Sweet little pies with excellent gluten-free pastry that's short and buttery with a chunky fruit filling.

DESSERTS & TEATIME TREATS



Christmas Tree Tear and Share, £2, Morrisons.
A divine, sweet dough full of fruit and spices that serves 11. Eat warm on Christmas morning.

Truly Irresistible Melt-In-The-Middle Chocolate Pudding, £4.99 for 530g, Co-op.
A gooey alternative to Christmas pud or a Boxing Day treat. Incredibly indulgent.



Try this

Don't forget to serve your festive desserts with oodles of clotted cream, custard or brandy butter – or a bit of each. We won't judge!



Loved By Us Gingerbread Loaves, 89p each, Co-op.
Pleasantly scented with warm ginger spices, these cakes are perfect for you to enjoy curled up on the sofa with a cuppa over the festive holidays.



Milk Chocolate and Raspberry Santa, £10 for 600g, Marks & Spencer. A wonderfully fun chocolate sponge cake with layers of chocolate mousse and raspberry jelly. Kids (young and old) will love it!



CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN!

Enjoy 24 days of deliciousness with Divine's Advent calendar – there's a seriously smooth Fairtrade chocolate behind every door

Christmas is coming – but it's the build-up that's the best bit! It all starts with Advent and that special ritual of ticking off the days. Made with seriously smooth Fairtrade milk chocolate, Divine's Advent calendar can be enjoyed by adults and children alike; a chocolate treat to count down to Christmas, it's the perfect way to show someone special they're loved. With each door that is opened, the nativity story unfolds – it's a great way to engage kids in the meaning of Christmas. And it's natural and suitable for vegetarians, too, so you can be sure they're getting the goodness of quality ingredients.

Each Divine chocolate is made with cocoa grown and harvested by farmers who have a share in the company, so you can embrace the spirit of the season with a gift that keeps on giving, with each delicious Divine bite!

Available to buy from Tesco, Waitrose, Booths, Oxfam, Ocado, Liberty, Abel & Cole and divinechocolate.com. RRP £4.

Divine
CHOCOLATE



Taste test

Raise your GLASSES



Got the food and company sorted... now it's time to choose the perfect wine

BEST FIZZ

Philippe Michel Crémant du Jura 2012, France, 12% (£7.29, Aldi)

Award-winning fizz with crisp, citrus fruit and a rounded, toasty brioche style. Ideal for a party.



Extra Special Marques de Portola Vintage Cava 2013, Spain, 11.5% (£7.98, Asda)

Rounded on the palate and dry on the finish, this will go well with a lunchtime buffet.



Cono Sur Sparkling Pinot Noir Rosé NV, Chile, 12.5% (£9.99, Tesco)

Pink fizz puts everyone in the mood for celebration and this one has a lovely fresh, fruity flavour.



Lambrusco Secco Reggiano NV, Emilia Romagna, Italy, 11% (£9, Marks & Spencer)

With a taste of dark forest fruits, this beauty is best served with canapés.



Taste the Difference Conegliano Prosecco Superiore DOCG 2014, Italy, 10.5% (£10, Sainsbury's)

A fabulously frothy and floral crowd-pleaser.



BEST WHITES

Hilltop Cserszegi Füzères NV, Hungary, 11% (£7, Asda)

Difficult to say (pronounce it chur-zeggy foo-zair-es) but oh-so-easy to drink! Ideal with spicy dishes.



Exquisite Collection Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2014, New Zealand, 12.5% (£7.99, Aldi)

A great aperitif or delicious with grilled fish and goats' cheese.



Taste the Difference Albariño 2014, Rías Baixas, Spain, 12.5% (£8, Sainsbury's)

This wine has light apricot aromas and a crisp, citrus taste. Team with fish and baked ham.



Reserve du Bouldes du Rhône Villages 2014, France, 13.5% (£9, Marks & Spencer)

Prefer white wine with your turkey? Go for this blend.



M Signature Chablis 1er Cru 2014, France, 13% (£9.99, Morrisons)

A Christmas classic, this unoaked wine goes well with oysters, prawns and salad starters.



BEST REDS

Soft and Juicy Chilean Red 2014, Chile, 13% (£4.99, Waitrose)

Just as it says on the label, this has soft, juicy cassis fruit and it is perfect with a winter casserole.



Finest Old Vine Selection Garnacha 2014, Spain, 14% (£5, Tesco)

This cherry and plum-filled wine is great with sausages, steaks and lamb chops.



The Wine Atlas Fetească Neagra 2014, Romania, 13% (£5.97, Asda)

Full of raspberry and damson fruit, this wine is fab with turkey sandwiches on Boxing Day.



Paul Mas Vinus Malbec 2014, Languedoc, France, 13.5% (£8, Morrisons)

Ideal for winter evenings, this robust wine has notes of plum and bramble.



Warwick The First Lady Cabernet Sauvignon 2013, South Africa, 13.5% (£10, Asda)

A smooth and silky wine that will accompany rich Christmas food with ease.



SOMETHING SPECIAL

Mulled Wine, Germany, 11% (£4.99, Waitrose)

Why bother to steep your own spices in red wine when this tasty version only takes minutes to warm up?



Chateau Mauras 2012, Sauternes, 13% (£8.99 for 50cl, Lidl)

With honeyed fruit and marmalade overtones, this sweet wine will go really well with desserts.



Rum Chata Liqueur, 15% (£12 for 50cl, Asda)

A creamy cinnamon and vanilla treat that you can pour over ice or into coffee.



Late Bottled Vintage Port 2009, Douro, Portugal, 20% (£11.49, Co-op)

Rich with flavour, this is a classic after-dinner drink to have with Stilton, nuts and chocolate.



De Bortoli Show Liqueur Muscat, Australia, 18% (£13.99, Tesco)

This wine tastes just like Christmas pudding, with caramel and raisin notes.



Prima promotion

Christmas *with a twist*

Finish your seasonal meal with an incredible, indulgent dessert. It's simple with a little help from Carte D'Or...



*Fun and
festive*

Carte D'Or Ice Cream Christmas Pudding

Turn the page to find out how to make this delicious dessert and other delights with Carte D'Or ice cream.



CARTE
D'OR



Carte D'Or Ice Cream Christmas Pudding

Soften a 900ml tub of Carte D'Or Gelateria Chocolate Brownie ice cream in the fridge for 15 mins. Line a 1 litre (1¾pt) pudding bowl with 3 layers of clingfilm. Mix 100g (3½oz) each of dried cranberries and pistachios through the softened ice cream. Spoon into the prepared pudding basin, smooth and freeze overnight. To serve, gently melt some white chocolate, turn out the ice cream pudding on to a serving plate or cake stand, drizzle over the melted chocolate and decorate with mini baubles for a festive finish.



TRY THIS
Next time, try dipping balls in chopped nuts or chocolate strands

BRILLIANT ICE CREAM BAUBLES

Working quickly, scoop round balls of Carte D'Or Vanilla Ice Cream on to a baking sheet lined with baking parchment. Freeze until completely solid. To serve, half-dip each ball in a bowl of sugar sprinkles. Thread a short length of ribbon through mini cake cases and rest on top of each ball.

APPROVED BY THE GHI EXPERTS The Vanilla, Strawberry and Gelateria Chocolate Inspiration flavours of Carte D'Or all have the Good Housekeeping Institute Approved endorsement. GHI experts and a consumer panel test for taste, texture, aroma and overall appearance. Only products that pass this rigorous Quality Assessment test are endorsed by the Good Housekeeping Institute.



Hazelnut and Salted Caramel Ice Cream Macaroon Stack

This is a stunning alternative to traditional puddings. Decorate the top or pile on chocolate curls for an impressive finish.

SERVES 8 PREP: 30 mins

COOK: 1 hr 15 mins

- 125g (4oz) blanched hazelnuts
- 3 medium egg whites
- 200g (7oz) icing sugar, sieved
- ¼tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 900ml tub Carte D'Or Salted Caramel

● Preheat oven to 130°C (110° fan) mark ½. Line two large baking sheets with baking parchment. Draw a 20.5cm (8in) circle on to each sheet of parchment,

then flip the parchment over so that the ink is now on the bottom.

● Put hazelnuts into a food processor and whiz until coarsely ground (don't over-process or it will be oily). Set aside.

● Put the egg whites into a large bowl and beat with a handheld electric whisk until they hold firm peaks. Add half the icing sugar and the bicarbonate of soda and (going slowly at first to prevent an icing sugar cloud) beat back up to stiff peaks. Add remaining icing sugar and the ground

nuts, and fold into the egg whites using a large metal spoon.

● Divide the hazelnut mixture between the two circle templates and spread into even rounds. Bake for 1 hr 15 mins, then leave to cool completely inside.

● To assemble, peel one of the meringue discs off the parchment and put on to a cake stand. Cover with balls of Carte D'Or Gelateria Salted Caramel ice cream and top with the remaining meringue disc. Decorate, if you like, and serve immediately.

Scrumptious
showstopper





Fill with your
favourite flavours

Spice Cinammon Biscuit Alaska Pie

A sweetly spiced version of a classic.

SERVES 8 PREP: 25 mins

COOK: 4 mins

- 200g (7oz) gingernut biscuits
- 75g (3oz) pecans
- 75g (3oz) unsalted butter, melted
- 900ml tub Carte D'Or Cinnamon Biscuit Ice Cream
- 4 medium egg whites
- 200g (7oz) caster sugar
- 1tsp cornflour

● In a food processor, whiz the biscuits and pecans into fine crumbs. Tip into a bowl and mix in the melted butter. Firmly press the mixture evenly into base and up the sides of a 3.5cm (1½in) deep, 20.5cm (8in) round fluted tart tin. Freeze for 15 mins until solid.

● Scoop Carte D'Or Cinnamon Biscuit ice cream into the biscuit base (still in tin) and smooth until roughly level. Freeze until ice cream is solid.

● To serve, preheat oven to 220°C (200°C fan) mark 7. In a large, grease-free bowl, whisk egg whites until they hold stiff peaks. Gradually add the sugar, whisking between each addition – the meringue should be stiff and glossy. Whisk in the cornflour.

● Working quickly, pile the meringue on to the ice cream layer, making sure it covers the ice cream completely. Swirl into peaks.

● Bake in preheated oven for 3 to 4 mins until golden. Remove from tin and serve immediately.



TRY THIS
Make sure you cover the ice cream completely to avoid any melting when baking



ICE CREAM SHARING BOWL (OPPOSITE)

Half blow up a balloon, then tie and tape it, knot-side down, into a small bowl or glass. Grease balloon with softened butter and chill. Pour over some melted dark chocolate to make a bowl shape. Chill to set, then brush over more melted dark chocolate and chill. Repeat process 2 or 3 times, finishing with a drizzle of melted white chocolate. Pop the balloon and carefully peel it out. Fill with balls of Carte D'Or Rum & Raisin, Praline and Cinnamon Biscuit ice cream.



TRY THIS

We used Mikado biscuits, but you could also serve this cocktail with chocolate cigarillos or wafer rolls



CARTE D'OR ICE CREAM COCKTAIL PUDDINGS

For each serving, in a small jug mix 100ml (3½fl oz) milk and 1tbsp each spiced rum and coffee liqueur. Chill. To serve, pour into a martini glass and scoop in a ball of Carte D'Or Gelateria Salted Caramel ice cream. Serve with chocolate-coated biscuits or wafer rolls and a spoon.



Festive Chocolate Ice Cream Yule Log

Treat chocolate lovers to this rich dessert.

SERVES 12 PREP: 30 mins

COOK: 12 mins

- 125g (4oz) caster sugar, plus extra to dust
- 3 large eggs
- 100g (3½oz) self-raising flour
- 25g (1oz) cocoa powder
- 900ml tub Carte D'Or Gelateria Chocolate Inspiration Ice Cream

FOR THE ICING:

- 75g (3oz) dark chocolate, chopped
- 100g (3½oz) unsalted butter, softened
- 125g (4oz) icing sugar, plus extra to dust

● Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan) mark 4. Line a 33 x 23cm (13 x 9in) Swiss roll tin with baking parchment. In a large bowl, whisk the sugar and eggs with an electric whisk for 10 mins until thick and fluffy. Sieve over the flour and cocoa then fold in carefully. Pour into the tin and gently smooth the surface. Bake for 10 to 12 mins until just firm.

● Dust a piece of baking parchment, that is larger than the sponge, with caster sugar (to prevent sticking). Invert the sponge on to the parchment paper, lift off tin and peel away the lining paper. Cover sponge with a tea towel and leave to cool. Meanwhile, soften the ice cream for 15 mins in the fridge.

● When the sponge is cool, spread the softened Carte D'Or Chocolate Inspiration ice cream over the sponge (leaving a small border). Using the parchment to help, roll the sponge up tightly. Trim the ends, then wrap the roll tightly in baking parchment and freeze while you make the icing.

● For the icing, gently melt the chocolate, then set aside to cool to room temperature (about 15 to 20 mins). Beat the butter and icing sugar to a creamy consistency, then beat in the cooled chocolate. Spread the Yule Log with the icing, and use a fork to make wood marks. Freeze on a tray for at least 6 hrs. Leave at room temperature for 10 to 15 mins to soften slightly, then dust with icing sugar. Slice to serve.



Prima promotion



Double
chocolate heaven

Prima promotion



Win a place on an exclusive dessert masterclass

You and a guest could attend an exclusive dessert and ice cream masterclass at the Good Housekeeping Institute Cookery School, in association with Carte D'Or, on Friday 11 December. The winner will also be treated to an overnight stay for two at a central London boutique hotel in a twin room with breakfast, plus lunch before the class – and, of course, the chance to eat the desserts they make! The winner and their guest will receive a goodie bag to take home. **Visit cartedorscoop.co.uk for full terms and conditions and your chance to enter.**

Mincemeat Tart with Carte D'Or Ice Cream

Embrace the festive season with this new take on traditional mince pies.

SERVES 9 PREP: 15 mins
COOK: 20 mins

- Flour, to dust
- 500g pack of puff pastry
- 275g (10oz) mincemeat
- 1 medium egg, beaten
- 1tsp demerara sugar

● Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C fan) mark 6. Line a baking sheet with baking parchment. On a floured

surface, roll out the pastry to 28 x 28cm (11 x 11in). Trim the pastry to 24 x 24cm (9½ x 9½in), reserving two strips.

● Cut the puff pastry into nine squares, each one about 8 x 8cm (3¼ x 3¼in). Score a border about 1cm (½in) around the inside of each pastry square and prick the middle with a fork. Cut out 18 small stars from the remaining pastry strips.

● Arrange pastry squares on the baking sheet. Spread 1tbsp mincemeat inside the border of each tart, then top with a few pastry stars. Brush the pastry with beaten egg and then sprinkle with sugar. Bake for about 15 to 20 mins until the pastry is golden and puffed. Serve hot or at room temperature with a ball of smooth Carte D'Or Vanilla ice cream.



Visit cartedorscoop.co.uk for further information on the Carte D'Or collection, including the Classic and Gelateria ranges.



GET MAKING!

MAKE IT ★ SEW IT ★ KNIT IT ★ GIVE IT ★ LOVE IT



SEE OVER THE PAGE FOR OUR FAB 11-PAGE MAKES SECTION 

READY TO PARTY

Choose a fabulous fabric to create your showstopping party dress or, if you prefer to cover your shoulders, make a glam skirt and add a long-sleeved top

1 An ultra-stylish strapless dress is the perfect choice for a special do.

Clutch bag, £22, F&F. Stacking rings, £7.50, Evans. Sheer tights, £6, s-xl, Marks & Spencer. Lace-up heels, £79, 3-8, Dune

2 With its flared shape and metallic finish, this skirt sure is a head-turner. Go on – give us a twirl!

Embellished blouse, £70, xs-xl, Great Plains. Earrings, £20, Phase Eight. Tights, as before. Black heels, £99, 3-8, Phase Eight

3 Get party-gorgeous – and show off those lovely legs of yours – in these stunning separates.

Embellished top, £59, 6-18, Coast. Tights, as before. Silver brogues, £69, 3-8, Dune

4 Up the glam factor in this fabulous LBD. Pair it with high heels and a pretty clutch for after dark.

Feather clutch, £79, Coast. Gem earrings, £8, Laura Ashley. Tights, as before. Lace-up heels, £79, 3-8, Dune



Get making!

NEED TO KNOW

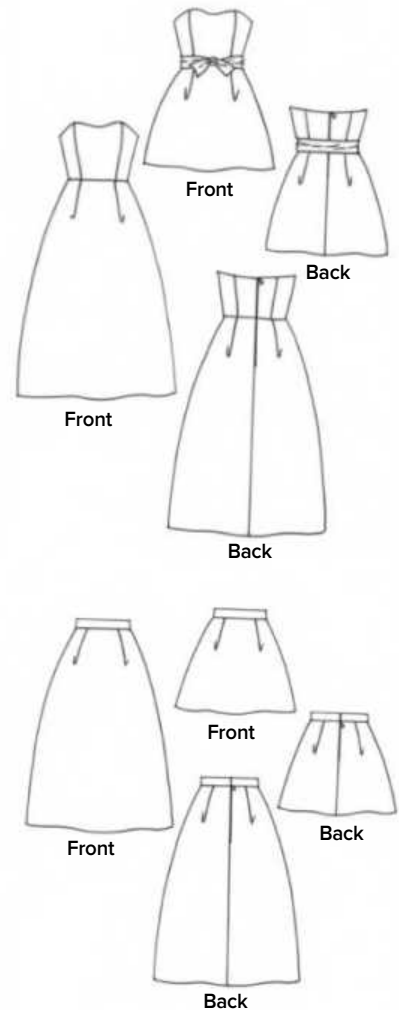
WOMEN'S SIZES 10-20

FABRICS

Look for beautiful evening fabrics such as silk dupion, taffeta, moire, cloque, sequinned fabrics and brocade. All our fabrics are from MacCulloch & Wallis.

INSTRUCTIONS

The pattern pieces, cutting layouts and sewing instructions are all on the Prima pattern.



TO ORDER THIS MONTH'S EXCLUSIVE PRIMA PATTERN,

call 0906 344 6850* (or, from the Republic of Ireland, 1560 716 140*).

If you're a subscriber and have opted in, the Prima pattern will be included FREE every month with your copy of Prima.

*Calls cost £1.50 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge (ROI €1.28 per minute) and should last no longer than two minutes. You must be over 18 to call. UK SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390. ROI SP: Phonovation/Spoke, 014378815. Lines close midnight, 31 December 2015. PLEASE ALLOW 28 DAYS FOR DELIVERY.



Feature: Janet Palmer Photos: Andy Parsons at Hearst Studios
Styling: Helen Johnson Hair & make-up: Anna Durston using
Phyto Illustrations: Terry Evans

For where to buy, see page 193

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE CRAFTY!

Fill your home
with our gorgeous
festive makes
or give them as
gifts for Christmas
and brighten
someone's day



TRY THIS

Why not make your
Christmas tree look
super stylish by
spray-painting it
white or gold.

COOL CHRISTMAS TREE

This tree takes up no space at all and will hold lots of your colourful decorations

YOU WILL NEED

- Branches or twigs
- Saw
- Twine
- Scissors
- Strong hook
- Decorations

TO MAKE

- 1 Start by gathering up branches and twigs in different sizes. Leave them in a shed to dry out.
- 2 When they are dry, line them up in size order to create a tree shape. You may need to saw some to size.
- 3 To keep the tree hanging straight and secure, tie three rows of twine to link the branches, keeping to your tree shape. Start at the top and

work your way down. Take time to ensure each branch is as straight as its natural bends will allow.

- 4 Once complete, tie a loop of twine at the centre of the top branch and hang your tree from a strong hook. Thread some small baubles on twine and hang from the middle of the bottom branch with a decoration at the end to create the look of the tree trunk. Decorate the rest of the tree.

• Decorations, from a selection, Dotcomgiftshop

POM-POM PEG DOLLS

A fun project that the children will love to help you with

YOU WILL NEED

- Wooden pegs
- Acrylic paint
- Paint brush
- Coloured pens
- Scissors
- Cardboard
- Wool
- Glue

TO MAKE

- 1 Paint the top and bottom of the pegs a skin colour and leave to dry. Then carefully paint on shoes, hair and a bodice.
- 2 Once the paint is dry, outline the elements with a thin black pen and draw on the face. Use a pale pink pen for the rosy cheeks. Add a lace effect to the neckline of the bodices, if you wish.
- 3 To make the pom-poms, cut two pieces of cardboard into circles with holes in the middle of each. Wrap wool around and through the two pieces at the same time until it is thick and there is no longer a hole in the middle. Use scissors to snip between the two circles of cardboard. Double up a piece of wool so it's about 25cm long and slip it in-between the cardboard discs. Tie the length of wool around the centre of the discs and knot tightly. Remove the cardboard and fluff up your pom-pom.
- 4 Carefully ease your peg doll through the wool, holding the pom-pom together. You may want to add a dot of glue at the back to hold the pom-pom in place.

• Peg dolls, £2 for 12, Hobbycraft. Fairy lights, £10, Talking Tables. Glass baubles, £1 for 4, Poundland ➔

Easy
make



Not too
tricky

FUN REEL WREATH



This festive spool wreath is so quick to make and it looks fantastic

YOU WILL NEED

- Wooden spools
- Ribbons
- Pins
- Pliers
- Wire hanger

TO MAKE

- 1 Wrap your wooden spools with pretty Christmas ribbons. Pin the ends of the ribbon so that they don't unravel.
 - 2 Use pliers to undo the top of the wire hanger and bend it into a large circular shape. Thread the spools on to the wire.
 - 3 Twist the top of the wire hanger together and cut off the excess. You can do this by bending the wire back and forth until it snaps.
 - 4 Tie a few lengths of ribbon at the top to decorate and hang your wreath in place.
- You can buy pretty ribbons and wooden spools on eBay



PRETTY STAR GIFT TAGS



For an extra special touch, personalise your gift tags

YOU WILL NEED

- Felt
- Water-erasable pen
- Embroidery hoop
- Needle
- Thread
- Scissors
- Pins
- Stuffing

TO MAKE

- 1 Draw the outline of a star on to the felt fabric. Write a name across the star.
 - 2 Set the felt into an embroidery hoop and sew over the name using a needle and thread.
 - 3 Remove the felt from the hoop and place a second piece of felt underneath. Cut out two stars at the same time. Pin them together then sew around the outside edge, leaving a gap.
 - 4 Add the stuffing and stitch up the gap. Add a loop of ribbon on to the back so the star can be attached to a gift or hung from the tree.
- Felt and ribbon, from a selection, Hobbycraft

Easy
make





LET THE COUNTDOWN BEGIN!

Use your skills

This cheerful bunting doubles up as an Advent calendar

YOU WILL NEED

- Fabric
- Scissors
- Sewing machine
- Blunt pencil
- Iron
- Number stencils
- Fabric glitter paint
- Pins
- Ribbon

TO MAKE

- 1 Cut out 24 triangles and 24 diamonds from your fabric (the triangles need to be exactly half the size of the diamonds).
- 2 For each piece of bunting, lay one of the triangles on to the bottom half of one of the diamond shapes, with the right sides together. Sew around the two long sides. Turn through to the right side and use a blunt pencil to push out the point.
- 3 Iron flat and fold the top of the diamond over the triangle. Press in place. Repeat with the rest of the pieces.

- 4 Stencil a number on to the front of each flap using fabric glitter paint, then leave to dry completely.
 - 5 Once dry, open up the pockets and position each one along the ribbon. Pin and sew in place, making sure that the pocket will close once sewn (the sewn line should be along the crease line where the diamond shape is folded over). Leave at least 15cm of ribbon at each end to attach your bunting to your mantelpiece. Place a small gift inside each pocket. Happy Advent!
- Fabrics, £7 for a fat quarter, Hobbycraft. Dylon glitter fabric paint, £3.65, Amazon. Baubles, £19.95 for 12; ribbon, £2.95 for 6m, all Dotcomgiftshop

LISA COMFORT CUSTOMISES IT!

Looking forward to party season but not sure your budget will stretch to a new dress? Don't fret – simply revamp an existing dress with some funky feathered cuffs. Easy!



OSTRICH FEATHER CUFFS

This is one of the simplest and fastest ways to customise a sleeved dress, and, wow, what an impact! Adding ostrich feathers to the cuffs will make your Christmas party dress look seriously glam!

YOU WILL NEED

- Sleeved dress
- Iron
- Ostrich feather trim (try eBay)
- Scissors
- Pins
- Needle and thread (in the same colour as your dress)



THE STEPS



1 Lay one of the dress sleeves flat and iron any creases. Using this sleeve as your guide, measure a length of feather trim to fit around the hem. Then add an extra 2cm for overlap. Cut it to this length.



2 Turn the sleeve inside out and pin the trim around the hem, starting at the seam. When you get to the end, overlap at the

starting point by 1cm. This will give you a neat finish.



3 Carefully turn the sleeve the right way around. With a needle and thread, stitch the trim in place with a backstitch. Follow the existing stitch line on the hem to ensure your stitches are discreet.



4 Repeat with the other sleeve and voilà. A new look in just 15 minutes!

Get making!

LITTLE KNITS, LOTS OF PLEASURE

Time to get out those knitting needles and create some lovely gifts for the small people and four-legged friends in your life!

prima
exclusive

ROMEO THE RACCOON

SIZE

Approximate height: 14cm when seated.

MATERIALS

One 50g ball of Debbie Bliss baby cashmerino in each of Slate 09 (A), Black 300 (B) and Ecrú 101 (C).

Pair of 2.75mm knitting needles.

Washable toy stuffing.

30cm of 1cm-wide ribbon.

Call 01535 664222 for yarn stockists

TENSION

30 sts and 44 rows to 10cm square over st-st using 2.75mm needles.

ABBREVIATIONS

beg beginning; **cm** centimetres; **cont** continue; **dec** decrease; **fol** following; **inc** increase; **k** knit; **kfb** k into front and back of next st; **m1** make one st by picking up and working into back of loop lying between st just worked and next st; **ML** make loop: k1, leave st on needle, bring yarn forward between sts, take yarn around tip of left thumb to make a small loop, take yarn back, k same st again, yon and pass the 2 sts just worked over the yon and off the needle; **p** purl; **patt** pattern; **rem** remaining; **rep** repeat; **RS** right side; **sl** slip; **ssk** [slip 1] twice, insert tip of left hand needle from left to right through the fronts of both slipped sts and work 2 tog; **st(s)** stitch(es); **st-st** stocking stitch; **WS** wrong side; **yon** yarn over needle.





Use your skills.

NOTES

- All pieces are worked in st-st on 2.75mm needles.
- The body and head are worked in one piece from the lower edge of the back up and over and down to the lower edge of the front. The base, legs and arms are worked separately.

BODY

1st Side Back With A, cast on 15 sts. **1st row** K to end. **2nd row** P to end. **3rd row** K1, m1, k to end. **4th to 7th rows** Rep 2nd and 3rd rows twice more.

18 sts. Beg with a p row, work 7 rows. Cut yarn and leave sts on the needle.

2nd Side Back With A, cast on 15 sts.

1st row K to end. **2nd row** P to end. **3rd row** K to last st, m1, k1. **4th to 7th rows** Rep 2nd and 3rd rows twice more. 18

sts. Beg with a p row, work 7 rows. Now work across all 36 sts to join the second and first sides of back as follows: **15th (joining) row (RS)** K16, ssk, k2tog, k to end. 34 sts. Work 3 rows in st-st. **19th row** K15, ssk, k2tog, k to end. 32 sts. Cont in this way to dec 2 sts in the centre of next 6 RS rows, ending with a p row. 20 sts. Place a marker at each end of last row.

Head Back **Next row** K1, [ssk] 4 times, k2, [k2tog] 4 times, k1. 12 sts. P 1 row.

Next row * [Kfb] 5 times, k1; rep from * once more. 22 sts. Work 3 rows in st-st.

Inc row K1, m1, k9, m1, k2, m1, k9, m1, k1. 26 sts. Work 17 rows in st-st. Do not break yarn.

Ears **Next row (RS)** With B, k8, turn and work on these sts only, leave rem sts on the needle. **** Next row P8. Next row** K1, ssk, k2, k2tog, k1. 6 sts. **Next row P6.**

Next row K1, ssk, k2tog, k1. 4 sts. **Next row P4. Next row** Ssk, k2tog. 2 sts. **Next row P2. Next row** Kfb, m1, k1. 4 sts. **Next**

row P4. Next row K1, m1, k2, m1, k1. 6 sts.

Next row P6. Next row K1, m1, k4, m1, k1.

8 sts. **Next row P8.** Cut yarn B ****.**

Next row (RS) With A, k across 8 sts of first ear, k3, ssk, k2tog, k3, do not cut A, with B, k8 and work on these sts only. Rep from ** to **. **Next row (RS)** With A, k across 8 sts of second ear. 24 sts.

Head Front With A, p 1 row. **Next row** K11, m1, k2, m1, k to end. 26 sts. Beg with a p row, work 5 rows in A only. With B, work 4 rows. **Next row** K11, ssk, k2tog, k4, turn and cont on these sts only for snout, leave rem sts on needle. **Next row** Sl 1, p9, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, k8, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, p7, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, k6, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, p5, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, k4, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, p3, turn. **Next row** Sl 1, k to end. **Next row** P all 24

sts. Cut B and cont in C only as follows: Work 4 rows. **Next row** K10, ssk, k2tog, k10. P 1 row. **Next row** K9, ssk, k2tog, k9. P 1 row. **Next row** K8, ssk, k2tog, k8. **Next row** P1, [p2tog] 4 times, [p2tog tbl] 4 times, p1. 10 sts. Cut C and cont in A only. **Next row** * [K1, m1] 4 times, k1; rep from * once more. 18 sts. Place a marker at each end of last row.

Body Front Beg with a p row, work 3 rows. **Next row** K1, m1, k to last st, m1, k1. Work 3 rows. Rep the last 4 rows 5 times more. 28 sts. **Next row** K12, ssk, k2tog, k12. P 1 row. **Next row** K11, ssk, k2tog, k11. 24 sts. P 1 row. Cast off.

BASE

With A, cast on 11 sts. Beg with a k row, work 2 rows. Cast on 2 sts at beg of next 2 rows. **Next row** Kfb, k to last 2 sts, kfb, k1. P 1 row. Rep the last 2 rows twice more. 21 sts. Work 7 rows. **Next row** Ssk, k to last 2 sts, k2tog. P 1 row. Rep the last 2 rows twice more. **Next row** Cast off 2 sts, k to last 2 sts, k2tog. **Next row** Cast off 2 sts, p to last 2 sts, p2tog tbl. **Next row** K to last 2 sts, k2tog. Cast off.

LEGS (make 2)

Cast on 12 sts, p 1 row. **Next row (RS)** K1, m1, k3, m1, k1, m1, k2, m1, k1, m1, k3, m1, k1. 18 sts. P 1 row. **Next row** K1, m1, k5, [m1, k2] 3 times, m1, k5, m1, k1. 24 sts. P 1 row. **Next row** K8, [m1, k4] twice, m1, k8. 27 sts. P 1 row. **Next row** K10, ssk, k3, k2tog, k10. **Next row** P10, p2tog, p1, p2tog tbl, p10. **Next row** K9, ssk, k1, k2tog, k9. **Next row** P8, p2tog, p1, p2tog tbl, p8. **Next row** K7, ssk, k1, k2tog, k7.

Next row P6, p2tog, p1, p2tog tbl, p6. 15 sts. Beg with a k row, work 16 rows. Cast off. Fold cast on edge in half and join the seam to form the sole, cont to join row-ends of leg. Fill the foot with stuffing, then lightly stuff the leg. Sew across the open end, with the seam placed centrally.

ARMS (make 2)

With A, cast on 10 sts. Beg with a k row work 12 rows. **Next row** Kfb, k to last 2 sts, kfb, k1. 12 sts. Beg with a p row, work 5 rows. **Next row** Ssk, k2, k2tog, ssk, k2, k2tog. 8 sts. P 1 row. **Next row** Ssk, k2tog, ssk, k2tog. 4 sts. **Next row** P2tog, p2tog tbl. 2 sts. Cast off. Fold in half and join row-ends. Lightly fill with stuffing.

TAIL

With C, cast on 17 sts. K 1 row. **1st row** (right side) K1, [ML, k1] to end. **2nd row** K to end. **3rd row** K2, [ML, k1] to last st, k1. **4th row** K to end. These 4 rows form the loop st and are repeated in stripes as follows: [4 rows B, 4 rows A] twice, then 3 rows B. **Dec row** With B, k2tog, k to last 2 sts, k2tog. 15 sts. Beg with 3rd row, with C, work 4 rows in loop st, 4 rows in B, 4 rows C, 1 row B. **Dec row** With B, k2tog, k to last 2 sts, k2tog. 13 sts. **Next row** As 1st row in B. **Cast off row** * K1, k2tog, pass 1st st over 2nd st and off needle; rep from * to last st, k1, pass 1st st over and fasten off. Join row-ends, matching stripes and lightly fill with stuffing. Stitch across the open end.

TO MAKE UP

Join the sides of the ears, then stitch across the base of each. Join the side seams of the head from base of ears to markers. Join sides of body, leaving a gap below the side markers, for the arms, insert arms and stitch in place, join any gaps in the side seams. Leaving a small gap in the centre of the cast off front edge, sew the legs either side of this gap. Sew the tail in place to the edges of the two sides of the back before the join, then catch stitch the ends of the back to secure. Fill the body with stuffing, then stitch the base in place to the body, leave a small gap to add any extra stuffing that may be needed, then close the gap. Work a few sts in B and C for the eyes and mouth. Tie ribbon in a bow around the neck.

Get making! ❄️

Just what your pooch
needs to look seasonal
and keep out the chill!



SANTA DOG COAT

TURN THE PAGE FOR FULL INSTRUCTIONS ➡️



Get making!



SANTA DOG COAT

SIZES

Small/Medium(Medium/Large)

Width measured around chest, excluding straps: 29(35)cm

Length measured along back: 29(34)cm

MATERIALS

2(3) 50g balls of Debbie Bliss Blue Faced Leicester Aran in each of Ecru (A) and Red (B), one 50g ball in Black (C) and a small amount in Amber (D). Pair each of 4mm and 4.50mm knitting needles.

Cable needle.

5cm pieces of 5cm wide sew 'n' sew loop and hook fastener in each of White and Black with matching sewing thread.

TENSION

18 sts and 34 rows to 10cm/4in square over main patt using 4.50mm needles.

ABBREVIATIONS

beg beginning; **C4B** slip next 2 sts onto cable needle and hold at back of work, k2, then k2 from cable needle; **C4F** slip next 2 sts onto cable needle and hold to front of work, k2, then k2 from cable needle; **cm** centimetres; **cont** continue; **inc** increase; **k** knit; **m1** make one st by picking up and working into back of loop lying between st just worked and next st; **p** purl; **patt** pattern; **rem** remaining; **rep** repeat; **RS** right side;

st(s) stitch(es); **st-st** stocking stitch; **tog** together; **Tw2** insert right-hand needle into front of 2nd st on left-hand needle and k1, leave st on needle, then k 1st st on left hand needle, slip both sts off needle together; **WS** wrong side.

NOTE

Length measurements given are adjustable to suit your dog.

MAIN PART

With 4.50mm needles and A, cast on 58(70) sts. **1st row** (RS) P to end. **2nd row** K1, [p into front, back and front of next st, k3tog] to last st, k1. **3rd row** P to end. **4th row** K1, [k3tog, p into front, back and front of next st] to last st, k1. These 4 rows **form** the blackberry patt and are repeated. Work a further 8 rows. **Next row** (RS) K10, slip these 10 sts onto a holder, break off A, join on B, k18(24), k2tog, k18(24) and leave the last 10 sts on a second holder. Work in main patt on centre 37(49) sts as follows: **1st row** (WS) P to end. **2nd row** P2, [k1, p3] 8(11) times, k1, p2. **3rd row** P37(49). **4th row** K1, [p3, k1] 9(12) times. These 4 rows **form** the patt and are repeated. Cont in patt until work measures 24(29)cm from cast on edge, ending with a wrong side row.

Shape neck

Next row (RS) Patt 14, cast off centre 9(21) sts, patt to end. **Next row** Patt to end. **Next row** Cast off 2 sts, patt to end. Rep these 2 rows 5 times more. 2 sts. Leave rem 2 sts on a holder. With WS facing, rejoin yarn to rem 14 sts. **Next row** Cast off 2 sts, patt to end. **Next row** Patt to end. Rep these 2 rows 5 times more. 2 sts. **Next row** Patt to end. **Pick up row** (RS) K2, pick up and k34(46) sts around cast off edge, then k2 sts from holder and leave these 38(50) sts on a holder.

Left side edging

With RS facing, (leaving a long end), join A to 10 sts on second holder, cont in patt until edging fits up side of coat to neck edge, ending with a WS row, leave these 10 sts on a holder.

Right side edging

With WS facing, (leaving a long end), join A to 10 sts on first holder, cont in patt until edging fits up side of coat to neck edge, ending with a WS row, do not break off yarn.

Collar

Sew edgings in place. With a spare length of A, cast on 20 sts, leave these sts on a spare needle. With RS facing, return to right side edging, cast on 20 sts, p these 20 sts, p10 from right side edging, k38(50) sts from neck edge holder, p10 sts from left side edging, then p20 from spare needle. 98(110) sts. Beg with a 2nd row, work 7 rows in blackberry st. Change to 4mm needles, patt a further 4 rows. Cast off.

BELT

With 4.50mm needles and C, cast on 12 sts. **Foundation row** (RS) P1, Tw2, p1, k4, p1, Tw2, p1. **Inc row** P5, m1, p2, m1, p5. 14 sts. **1st row** P1, Tw2, p1, C4B, k2, p1, Tw2, p1. **2nd row** P to end. **3rd row** P1, Tw2, p1, k2, C4F, p1, Tw2, p1. **4th row** P to end. Rep the 1st to 4th rows until belt measures approximately 66(76)cm, ending with a 1st row. Cast off knitwise, working [k1, k2tog] twice across the central 6 cable sts.

BUCKLE

With 4mm needles and D, cast on 40 sts. **1st row** K to end. **2nd row** K5, [m1, k1, m1, k9] 3 times, m1, k1, m1, k4. 48 sts. **3rd row** K5, [m1, k1, m1, k11] 3 times, m1, k1, m1, k6. 56 sts. **4th row** K7, [m1, k1, m1, k13] 3 times, m1, k1, m1, k6. 64 sts. Cast off and inc on this row as before. Join the row ends.

Prong

With 4mm needles and D, cast on 17 sts. P 1 row. Cast off.

TO FINISH

Position the belt centrally on main coat, lay the coat on your dog to determine how far from the neck collar it needs to be and slipstitch in place. Position the buckle over the centre of the belt with the seam to one side and slipstitch in place, attach the ends of the prong over the buckle seam. Cut the piece of white loop and hook fastener in half and sew the hook section to the wrong side of one end of the neck collar and the loop section to the right side of the other end of the neck collar; you may need to adjust this positioning, depending on your dog. Sew the hook section of the black piece to the wrong side of one end of the belt and the loop section to the right side of the other end of the belt.





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A festive night out at the movies



Diane Keaton and John Goodman star in *Christmas with the Coopers*

CHRISTMAS WITH THE COOPERS

This festive comedy features Diane Keaton and John Goodman as ageing parents who want to provide their now grown-up kids with the perfect 'chestnuts roasting on an open fire' Christmas but, of course, a myriad of obstacles stands in their way...

Out 4 December

THE NIGHT BEFORE

Three best friends (played by Seth Rogen, Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Anthony Mackie) embark on one final Christmas Eve rampage before settling down to the responsibilities of adult life. Think *The Hangover* with tinsel, nativity scenes and a midnight mass thrown in. No one's applauding their juvenile antics (well, not much), but you can't help giggling, as usual, at Seth Rogen's boyish charm – here it twinkles like the fairy lights on a Christmas tree. **Out 11 December**

STAR WARS: EPISODE VII – THE FORCE AWAKENS

Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Princess Leia – played by Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher from the original *Star Wars* films – are back! Oscar Isaac, Simon Pegg and *Girls* star Adam Driver join the cast in what's likely to be the most hyped box office hit of the season. The plot is being kept firmly under wraps but rest assured it will be a roller-coaster ride of good versus evil. May the force be with them! **Out 17 December**

DADDY'S HOME

This heart-warming, laugh-out-loud film is the perfect Boxing Day outing. It stars Will Ferrell as Brad, the dependable stepdad who's trying to win over the two children of his new wife Sarah. It's going fine (ish!) until their real father appears on the scene. Dusty is a good-looking, fun-all-the-way dad, adored by the duo, and Brad is, well, none of these. A fierce and very funny battle of one-upmanship ensues, but who will come out on top? **Out 26 December**

Best Christmas TV



The *Sherlock* boys are back

SHERLOCK

BBC ONE
Benedict Cumberbatch (left) and Martin Freeman (far left) found time in their busy schedules to film a 90-minute Christmas special and a new, three-part series

of this hugely popular show. Although usually set in the modern day, the festive outing takes Sherlock and Watson back to the Victorian era. Perfect for fireside Christmas viewing.

CALL THE MIDWIFE

BBC ONE

The show that's all about birth is now as much a part of Christmas as the nativity itself. In this year's special, set in 1960, some of Poplar's residents are preparing for a bus trip to see Regent Street's lights and a BBC crew visit for a televised carol concert. As always, there's a winning mix of humour, drama and humanity.

AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

BBC ONE

Look forward to this brilliant TV adaptation of one of Agatha Christie's bestselling crime novels. Set in 1939, the three-part drama tells the tale of 10 strangers on a remote island off the coast of Devon. Gradually, each of them is murdered. But who is the killer? Its great cast includes *Poldark* star Aidan Turner. What a treat!



DOWNTON ABBEY

ITV
Prepare to bid an emotional farewell as *Downton* signs off with this two-hour Christmas special. Though we

know it's set in 1927, exact plot lines are as carefully guarded as the Crawley family silver.



Christmas is for kids

And they certainly haven't been forgotten in this year's festive TV schedule. Here are a couple of the highlights for little ones...

SHAUN THE SHEEP – THE FARMER'S LLAMAS BBC ONE

From the brilliant Aardman studios, which previously gave us *Wallace & Gromit*, comes a 30-minute special that chronicles the adventures of the woolly hero. Here we meet llamas Hector, Fernando and Raul, who run riot at Mossy Bottom Farm. They are three of the naughtiest characters ever created.

BILLIONAIRE BOY BBC ONE

Previous TV adaptations of David Walliams's *Mr Stink* and *Gangsta Granny* proved to be huge festive hits. Not surprising, then, that the BBC commissioned *Billionaire Boy* – the story of super-wealthy Joe who has everything a boy could want, except for friends. Walliams, who appears as school dinner lady Mrs Trafe, is joined by Rebecca Front and Warwick Davis.

YOU SHALL GO TO THE BALL

Cinderella is a firm panto favourite for children and adults alike, and there are lots of productions to choose from this year...

- The Manchester Opera House's version stars Olympic heroes Torvill and Dean as Fairy Godparents (below); atgtickets.com.

- The Birmingham Barclaycard Arena hosts what is claimed to be the 'world's biggest pantomime', with a cast of over 100; theticketfactory.com.

- Lastly, adults-only *Sinderella* is on at the Pontardawe Arts Centre. Leave the kids (and your blushes!) at home; nptartsandents.co.uk



A SAMBA WITH

Ainsley Harriott

Celebrity chef Ainsley Harriott, 58, is best known for *Ready, Steady, Cook* and is one of the stars of this year's *Strictly Come Dancing*. He is separated, lives in London and has two grown-up children, Jamie, 24 and Maddie, 21.



Did you have any dance experience before you joined *Strictly*?

My sister and I went to the local ballet school in Wandsworth when we were young. However, my time there was mostly spent prancing around on stage and wondering why I was the only boy in the class! It was fun, but I don't think I learned much, and I stopped going when my sister was thrown out for being too tall. More recently, I've been embarrassing my kids with my dad dancing and so the discipline of doing it properly on *Strictly* was completely new to me.

How tough is it really?

More than you might think – and it takes a weird dedication. You cancel your life around training and then inhabit a world where everyone competing becomes like a member of your family. You're constantly either receiving or sending encouraging texts to each other. But physically, the training is extremely demanding.

Are you proud to be the oldest dancer in the 2015 competition?

I never think about my age and believe it's what you have 'upstairs' that really matters. It's about your genes, your luck and your ability to laugh. Nothing keeps you younger. Mind you, how great would it be if someone my age was to win the competition? How refreshing and reassuring for older people out there watching. Let's not forget that half the nation is over 50.

Who taught you to cook?

In the first instance, my lovely mum Peppy. She was a brilliant and exceptional cook. I learned from her

that food is a way to make everyone around you happy. I was lucky, too, as she was a stay-at-home mum, so there was always something delicious on the table to eat when I arrived home from school. My dad was also quite something in the kitchen. His accent was pretty pucker English, until he started cooking, at which point it would revert to his Jamaican roots.

How do you relax?

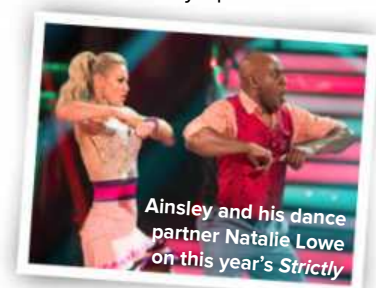
I love to go on long walks with my Labrador, Bobby – I'm completely potty about him. I'm also a big Arsenal fan and support them at the Emirates stadium whenever I can. I'm still friends with many of the guys I was at school with in Wandsworth, where I've lived all my life. We have a backgammon club, but it's really just an excuse for us to get together.

What would be your last meal?

My mum's red bean stew and dumplings. It was a labour of love that would take her days and it is the dish that always makes me think of her.

Do you have any advice for stressed cooks this Christmas?

You'll enjoy the whole thing much more if you have a step-by-step plan and stick to it like a military operation.



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Don't Wake Dad!' (age 5+, RRP £22.99). Players must creep past a sleeping Dad as he snores in his bed. For stockists and to play games online, visit drumondpark.com. **Call 0905 817 2754 (80ppm)*.**

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GVPRAL15669



A taste of India

To celebrate the Victoria and Albert Museum's India Festival, we have a fantastic Indian-inspired prize package worth £1,000 for one lucky reader. Our prize includes a hand-block printed muslin quilt from Good Earth India, plus a two-night stay for two at the Novotel London Paddington Hotel – the perfect base for exploring the capital. The winner will also receive a catalogue from The Fabric of India exhibition (which runs until 10 January 2016), plus two tickets to Bejewelled Treasures: The Al Thani Collection (until 28 March 2016). Visit vam.ac.uk/indiafestival and novotel.com.

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READER SHORT STORY

A vintage find

Doing a festive favour brought an unexpected gift for this Christmas Carol

Carol breathed in the warm fug of Christmas as she pushed her way into the Great Hall. The heady mix of cinnamon, pine needles, mandarin and cloves prompted a sharp intake of breath, which was what she needed. The morning hadn't gone well so far.

A call from her old university friend Isobel the day before had added to her annual pre-Christmas madness.

'I'm doing a stall at the vintage fair at Collingwood Castle, just up the road from you. Why don't you give me a hand?'

So, 24 hours later, after a Saturday morning baking session producing a sorry-looking tin of Nigella's mince pies that bore little resemblance to the glossy picture, Carol looked around for her friend.

She had struggled to find a parking space on the frost-topped castle lawn, which was now rammed with endless rows of four-wheel-drive vehicles. If there was a thaw, she'd never get her old Golf out of the mud.

On the strength of the mince pies, she managed to blag her way through and avoid the £5 entrance fee. 'I'm just dropping these off for a friend who's running a stall. I'm not stopping.' The spotty youth holding the money tin reluctantly waved her through.

The wood-panelled hall was crammed with stalls and bargain hunters. A stand with jars of preserves wrapped in red and green gingham momentarily distracted Carol and she bought two containing overpriced cranberry sauce for Christmas Day, which of course no one would eat.

She hadn't seen Isobel for some time so she thought she should try to pick her up a small something for Christmas. A stall full of Victorian trinkets, glasses and bags caught her eye. In particular, a slightly moth-eaten, velvet drawstring bag in a deep rose colour looked suitable.

'It's original. Difficult to get hold of. Sought after.' The stall holder's voice trailed off as she noticed a more promising punter fingering an expensive silver tray.

The bag was £12. 'Would you take £10?' asked Carol, tentatively. She watched *Bargain Hunt* and knew the form.

'No,' the woman replied flatly.

'I'll have it,' said Carol, smiling pleasantly but feeling ridiculous. It was more than she'd wanted to spend, but she needed something now, so there was nothing else for it.

She looked around at the sea of stalls lining the room and the polished wooden corridors beyond. She'd be lucky to ever find Isobel. She should have arrived earlier.



As she climbed the stairs to the next level of stalls, the smell of mulled wine encouraged her to pay out £3 for a polystyrene fix of a warm, sweet, vaguely alcoholic brew, which she gulped down a bit too quickly.

As she looked around her, she noticed a small, dark, oak-framed drawing of rabbits around a Christmas tree propped behind a tapestry footstool. She stepped forward for a closer look. She couldn't believe it. The picture had been a birthday present from her now deceased grandma. Her uninspired parents had called her Carol, as she had been born on Boxing Day. For her, Christmas and birthdays had always felt one and the same.

She suddenly felt very teary. The picture had gone to a charity shop by mistake when they moved 18 years ago, and now here it was. The picture was £20, which she knew she didn't have in cash after buying the bag for Isobel. She'd have to come back later.

As she turned away, she heard her friend calling from across the room.

'Over here, Carol. I'm over here.'

The two friends hugged.

'It's so busy,' they both said together, and laughed.

'Here, put down your things. Mince pies – fab!' said Isobel.

'You won't believe it, Isobel. I've just found a picture I had as a child and it was lost and now it's on that stall over there – it's a rabbit drawing.'

'Wow,' said Isobel. 'That's amazing,'

With that, three people suddenly appeared at Isobel's stall clamouring to buy her vintage china pieces.

'It happens like this,' shouted Isobel. 'Nothing, and then suddenly you get a rush.'

With the sudden activity, Carol didn't notice her friend slip away for a few minutes.

Half an hour later, the two women gave a sigh of relief.

Carol escaped with money borrowed from her friend to buy back her lost picture. But, when she arrived at the stall, she saw that it had gone and she felt a rush of disappointment. If only she hadn't bought that gift for Isobel she'd have had the cash.

She returned to Isobel's stall. 'Gone,' she said sadly.

Her friend smiled and produced a brown paper package.

'Happy Christmas, Carol.'

The rabbits looked out at her and she smiled. This really was the best Christmas present ever.



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- **FREE Elemis gift per person worth £38, which includes Tri-enzyme Resurfacing Facial Wash (50ml), Papaya Enzyme Peel (15ml) and Cellular Recovery Skin Bliss Capsules (14), presented in a zipped travel bag**
- **Plus, 15% discount on any additional Elemis treatments booked**
- **All meals included for your whole stay (breakfast in bed, three-course buffet lunch and three-course dinner)**
- **Elemis skincare consultation**
- **Check out at 2pm**

Why not get away from it all in style with a relaxing stay at Leicestershire's Ragdale Hall Health Hydro & Thermal Spa? The rural setting makes it the

ideal place to unwind – whether you want to be pampered, kick-start your health regime or just enjoy the beautiful surroundings.

EXTEND YOUR VISIT: To make your stay more special, why not book an extra night for just £169 per person? The price includes all meals, another 40-minute treatment (from the choices listed, left) and full use of all the facilities. Plus, you'll get a further 10% discount if you book two breaks for 2016 NOW! (Both breaks must be booked at the same time; extra discount not applicable on the third night option.)

To book, call 01664 433013 and quote reference PRIMADEC15 when booking to claim your special exclusive discount and free gift.



TERMS & CONDITIONS: This offer is subject to availability. Break must be taken before 19 December 2016. Ragdale Hall Health Hydro, Ragdale Village, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire LE14 3PB. Offer based on sharing a Superior Twin/Double/Triple Room for two nights. Third night option available (extra discount not applicable to third night option).

A FREE* necklace you'll love!



***Plus £4.45 p&p**

Treat yourself to a gorgeous heart-shaped necklace – perfect for showing off over the festive season with your favourite LBD!



This Crimson Heart necklace (RRP £16.95) is just the thing to add a touch of glamour to your festive wardrobe. It features a highly polished black open heart crafted from hematite stone, suspended from an 18in chain of magnetic hematite beads and crimson spheres, interspersed with fine silver balls. It can be yours for FREE – just pay £4.45 for p&p.

EXCLUSIVE TO PRIMA READERS!

You can also buy the Crimson Bead bracelet and earrings. The 7.5in bracelet (RRP £13.95) features a chain of magnetic hematite beads and fine silver balls, and can be yours for just £7.95, plus £4.45 p&p. The necklace

and bracelet feature a convenient self-locating magnetic clasp – great if you struggle with fiddly clasps.

The matching earrings (RRP £7.95) are £4.95, plus £4.45 p&p.

Plus, you can buy this beautiful Rouen silk scarf (left; RRP £25), for the special price of £14, plus £4.45 p&p. The scarf measures 130cm x 130cm.



HOW TO ORDER

Complete the coupon below and send it with a cheque or postal order for £4.45 p&p, plus any payment, made payable to Nice Ideas, to: Nice Ideas, PO Box 7111, Finedon, Northants NN9 5WN. Alternatively, you can order the necklace by phone or online (using a debit card). Call 01933 680573 (9am to 5pm, weekdays) or visit nice-ideas.co.uk and use the code PRIMA.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Offer closes 8 January 2016. Credit cards are only accepted online. Please allow 28 days from receipt of order for delivery. *P&P is £4.45. Offer is open to UK addresses only. Only one application per household. All offers subject to availability. Full refunds will only be given if the product is damaged or faulty. Nice Ideas will not forward any of your details to any agencies or organisations. Nice Ideas are dedicated to the use of therapy magnets for pain relief and general wellbeing. Nice Ideas bracelets have been carefully produced using only the highest quality materials. All designs are guaranteed for one year.

PLEASE SEND ME

Item	Price	Quantity	Total
Crimson Heart necklace	FREE (RRP £16.95)	1	FREE
Crimson Bead bracelet	£7.95 (RRP £13.95)		
Crimson Bead earrings	£4.95 (RRP £7.95)		
Rouen silk scarf	£14 (RRP £25)		
Postage			£4.45
TOTAL			

Title Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms ☐ Mr ☐ Other _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Mobile _____ Email _____

I enclose a cheque or postal order, made payable to Nice Ideas, for the sum of £ _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Puzzles for you to enjoy

Three pages of fun – with cash prizes to win!

ACROSS

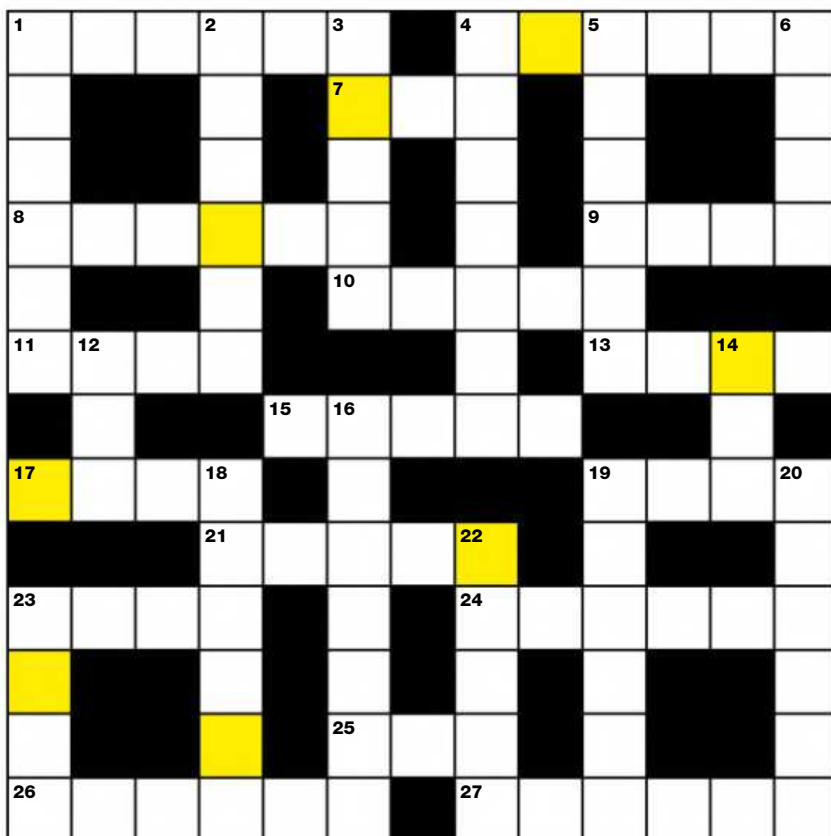
- 1 Appeared to be (6)
 4 Country, capital Athens, where shoes are burned at Christmas for luck in the new year (6)
 7 Historical period (3)
 8 Exile (6)
 9 Follow orders (4)
 10 Country, capital Rome, where a good witch called La Befana delivers gifts on a broomstick (5)
 11 As well, too (4)
 13 Disappear under water (4)
 15 Scrape, graze (5)
 17 Cut into cubes (4)
 19 Zodiac symbol for Taurus (4)
 21 Code made up of dots and dashes (5)
 23 Roasted meat enjoyed with mint sauce (4)
 24 Duck noises or doctors? (6)
 25 Muhammad ____, boxing great (3)
 26 Peels off (of paint, eg) (6)
 27 Country, capital Warsaw, where a piece of iron is placed under the Christmas dining table to make sure everyone has strong legs (6)

DOWN

- 1 Country, capital Belgrade, where two Sundays before Christmas children tie up their mums, who then give gifts in order to be freed (6)
 2 Central American country where, in the run-up to Christmas, a radish festival sees farmers carve figures out of vegetables (6)
 3 New ____, capital of India where mango trees are often decorated instead of fir trees (5)
 4 *Lord of the Rings* wizard played by Sir Ian McKellen (7)
 5 Takes pleasure in (6)
 6 Jealousy, covetousness (4)
 12 Hawaiian garland (3)
 14 No score (3)
 16 Venezuelan capital (7)
 18 Board a ship, eg (6)
 19 South American country where folk celebrate the legend that animals can speak on Christmas night (6)
 20 Stayed the course, endured (6)
 22 Kit out (5)
 23 Green tree part (4)

CROSSWORD

WIN
£50



23 ACROSS



25 ACROSS



10 ACROSS

Call with your answer on 0901 609 4228*

Solve the crossword in the usual way. When completed correctly, the yellow squares, reading top to bottom, left to right, will spell out your prize answer (Arctic animal that helps Santa, 8). **Call 0901 609 4228*** and leave your name, address and the answer. All calls cost 65p per minute, plus your telephone company's network access charge, and should last no longer than two minutes. You can also write in – see **HOW TO ENTER** (on the following page). ➔

CODEWORD

WIN
£50

For £50, see if St Nick can help you work out the number code for each letter of the alphabet. We've placed the letter S, now you do the same with the letters T, N, I, C and K, and on you go. When you're done, use your key grid to find out the prize word. **Call 0901 609 4229*** and leave your name, address and the answer. All calls cost 65p per minute, plus your telephone company's network access charge, and should last no longer than two minutes. You can also write in – see **HOW TO ENTER** (below).

A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J
K
L
M
N
O
P
Q
R
S
T
U
V
W
X
Y
Z



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
S	T	N	I	C	K							
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

YOUR KEY GRID:

25	7	23	25	12	21	1

Call with your answer on **0901 609 4229***

HOW TO ENTER

***YOU CAN CALL WITH YOUR ANSWERS** (see numbers with the Win £50 puzzles), leaving your name and address. Or you can write in – send your answer on a postcard with your contact details to: Prima Puzzles, /PUPRAN15662 (for the Crossword), /PUPRAN15663 (for the Codeword) or /PUPRAN15664 (for the Arrow-word), The Data Solutions Centre, Workshop S80 2RT. **The closing date is midnight, 31 December 2015 (three working days later for postal entries). If you call to enter after the closing date, you will not be entered but you will be charged.** The competition is open to UK residents only and the usual rules apply.

DATA PROTECTION: We will use the information you supply to process your competition entry. For our privacy policy, visit hearst.co.uk/dp. SP: Spoke, call 0333 202 3390.



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LAST MONTH'S JUST FOR FUN SOLUTIONS

SUDOKU

5	9	2	6	3	1	7	8	4
1	7	8	5	9	4	6	2	3
6	4	3	7	2	8	9	1	5
8	5	4	9	6	3	2	7	1
9	2	1	8	5	7	3	4	6
3	6	7	1	4	2	5	9	8
2	1	6	4	7	5	8	3	9
7	8	9	3	1	6	4	5	2
4	3	5	2	8	9	1	6	7

EASY PEASY

4	9	1	6	8	2	3	7	5
2	5	7	9	3	1	8	6	4
3	6	8	7	4	5	2	1	9
5	4	9	1	2	6	7	3	8
8	1	2	5	7	3	9	4	6
7	3	6	8	9	4	5	2	1
9	8	3	4	1	7	6	5	2
1	2	5	3	6	8	4	9	7
6	7	4	2	5	9	1	8	3

TOUGH STUFF

SEPTEMBER 2015 PRIZE SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD Overcome

CODEWORD Virtual

ARROW-WORD Elves

* Solutions to this month's prize-winning puzzles will be in the March 2016 issue.

WIN
£50

ARROW-WORD

Put your feet up and win
£50 at the same time!

Fill in the grid according to the arrows. When done, the shaded yellow squares will reveal the answer to the following question:
What is the name of the London sweet maker who created the first Christmas crackers in 1847? (3,5)

Shoots eaten by pandas	Male cat		___ Vegas, gamblers' heaven	Ancient Peruvian Indian	Tube-shaped pasta	Women's underwear item	Don't put all of them in one basket	Slightly wet, moist	Commer- cials	Paradise Lost poet	Indian guitar	Foe of Dr Who
						Common butterfly (3,7)						
US name for petrol	Chap, bloke				Make longer	Farmhouse cooker			Take a seat		Bear from Jellystone Park	Depend
			Division of an act within a play			Greenwich Mean Time (1,1,1)			Tier			
Easy as ___, saying (1,1,1)	Celebratory bash		Wood chopper			Type of snake			Unit of scoring in golf			
			Seventh Greek letter	Courage, pluck					Thickness	___ out, made last	Flashy wheeler dealer	Diplomacy
Ancient Roman garment	Popular food fish	Magritte, artist										
									Enchant	Only Just Begun, song	Small fish, minnow	Truthfulness
Completely taken with	Measure of distance											
			Football playing field	Select group		Lariat			Danny ___, diminutive US actor			
Top card	Remove the skin from a banana, eg								Popular Mexican dish	For ___ The Bell Tolls, novel	Wyatt ___, infamous US marshal	Chantilly material, eg
				Successful British singer					Dee or Dum, Wonderland twins			
Danger	Leaves a gratuity for a waiter, eg					Yay!					Cry of woe	
			In the ___, out of the sun						Right			
Respond	Brave man					Opposite of top					Animal that is hunted for food	

Join in and WIN £50

Fill in the answers to the clues and the letters in the eight shaded squares will spell out your prize answer

Call 0901 609 4230* and leave your name, address and the answer. All calls cost 65p per minute, plus your telephone company's network access charge, and should last no longer than two minutes. You can also write in – see [HOW TO ENTER](#) (opposite page).

Call with your answer
on 0901 609 4230*

8		7	4	5	1		2	
6	1	9				4	5	
5		2	3	9	6	8	7	
9	2	3		1				8
7			9	6	2			4
4				3		2	9	7
	5	6	8	4	9	7		
	7	8				3	4	9
	9		1	7	3	6		5

EASY PEASY

		7						8
	8		4	5		2		
1			2	3		9		
7				8	2			6
		2	6		1	3		
3					4			7
6			1	2		8		
	1		7	4		6		
	3	9					1	4

TOUGH STUFF

SUDOKU

Place the numbers from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each column and each 3 x 3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9.

Just for
FUN

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

For your friends and family



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Your Stars for December

with
Lori Reid



Sagittarius

23 November – 22 December

You are blessed with power and wisdom to best handle December's stresses. Friends, children and money are the main pressure points early on, but the 11th restores harmony. Bountiful Jupiter in charge now will bring you an emotionally enriching Christmas.

Capricorn

23 December – 20 January

It's all systems go at the start of the month. Normal family life is bound to be disrupted as house and home undergo a transformation. On the social front, you are in high demand. From the 22nd, you feel fresh energy and enthusiasm, with good news from afar adding to all the Christmas cheer.

Aquarius

21 January – 19 February

Life gathers pace as you stretch your vistas and pull long-range plans into shape. Work-wise, you're making a good impression, with the 17th a favourable date for giving a presentation. Looking for love? Romance and work are linked; you could be swept away at the office Christmas party.

Pisces

20 February – 20 March

In the midst of this festive month, work takes on greater significance. Your chances of promotion look good on the 11th. Changing your image – a different hairstyle or new glasses – gives you a boost! Whether you're in a new or lifelong relationship, love makes Christmas extra special.



Aries

21 March – 20 April

Itchy feet? With faraway skies beckoning, you're likely to be on the road a lot this month. You're hungry for knowledge and experiences, either through training or travel. Believe in your ideas: they'll make more money. Personal relationships could prove tricky, but once home, you're keen to settle in for a happy, heart-warming Christmas.

Taurus

21 April – 20 May

Foreign connections are starred with romance linking travel, elegant settings and encounters far from home. Watch your health in the second week as you rush to get things done. Money matters are bright, with the prospect of a bonus easing the seasonal spend. With Jupiter lighting up the 25th, this should be a Christmas to remember.

Gemini

21 May – 21 June

Christmas is a time for home and family and, with Jupiter filling your house with fun and frolics, the holidays won't disappoint. If you've been invited to lots of parties, don't go wild. Work is pleasing and a mid-month achievement is outstanding. Whether single or attached, a surprise meeting adds a touch of magic and puts you in a romantic mood.

Cancer

22 June – 23 July

It's a crazy start to the month as you juggle a multitude of demands. Fortunately, around the 11th, you turn a corner and a new chapter begins. Family life is busier than ever, but you get through it with love and support. Christmas week is star-studded with creative projects, and the 25th puts you in high spirits, making all your hard work worthwhile.

Leo

24 July – 23 August

The hectic pace that began last month continues, but don't worry. Obstacles will slowly melt away so a new venture can get the green light. Your extravagant nature can go over the top at Christmas, but not this year: gifts will be refined and sophisticated.

Virgo

24 August – 23 September

If there's anything that is going to dampen the spirit of Christmas, it's money. Whether buying presents or spending on home improvements, your finances could spiral out of control, so be very careful. From the 22nd, you're ready to party. Happy, lucky and blessed, for you the 25th is starred.

Libra

24 September – 22 October

Life might be frantic right now, but much of the chaos comes together successfully in time for the big day. Events are much calmer in the second week, when taking time out for a little pampering eases your festive stress. Your secret plans hit all the right notes on Christmas Day, to your delight.

Scorpio

23 October – 22 November

Having put in the legwork, you can let work matters tick over as you focus on your personal life. The 11th is a turnaround date for money, with a chance of a cash injection. Your charm and charisma make you a magnet for love, especially on the 17th. Socially, you're in happy company this Christmas.

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Feel good, look good



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Dear Santa, please may I have...

When it comes to her Christmas wish list, our columnist Caroline Quentin confesses to a lust for gadgets

Rum tee tum tee tum, INSPECT YOUR GADGETS! Rum tee tum tee tum, dee daa! sings my son to the tune of *Inspector Gadget*, as I open the door to a kitchen cupboard that contains a veritable cornucopia of dusty contraptions and paraphernalia. It's an Aladdin's cave, or a white elephant's graveyard, depending on your point of view. Full of the once longed for, soon forgotten labour-saving innovations that I have briefly fallen for and quickly lost interest in. My son is right though, I do from time to time 'inspect my gadgets', just in case there is something I need, lurking in the dark, something that might finally come in handy.

There's a bread machine and a yoghurt maker, a fish kettle and an egg poacher, a candy floss spinner and a thing that... well, what *does* it do? I can't quite remember and it's not in its box so I'll probably never know.

There are blades, too; for chopping, for dicing, and one that shaves a cucumber so finely, it's barely visible to the naked eye. There are bits of kit that promised to make cooking with oil a thing of the past and there are hunks of metal that

get so hot, they melt every bit of cheddar within a 50-mile radius.

There are shredders and mashers, skimmers and separators, a bain-marie and rice fluffer, and then there's The Juicer. I was on a health kick and wanted to get more vitamins down my neck. This huge, shiny metal thing that looks like RoboCop was so expensive that just to see it makes me feel sick. Alas, so did the kale and beetroot juice it churned out.

It's usually just before Christmas that I spot a new machine in the shops. Convinced it'll change my culinary life forever, I start dropping hints to anyone who'll listen that should Santa look kindly on me, this is what I'd like him to deposit on to my work surface on 25 December.

'I've seen the food future... and it's spiral-shaped'

I've seen what I want this year. It's fabulous and I *know* it will change my culinary life forever. It's a spiralizer. I can't wait to try it for myself. It can turn a courgette into ribbons! What's not to like? No more stodgy pasta, just beautiful skinny shoelaces of veg, so healthy and easy to make.

Okay, the kids might moan – they do love spaghetti – and my husband may not be keen as he's a confirmed lasagne man, but I'm sure, before long, the whole family will be spiralizing like crazy. Imagine the fun we'll have. Curly golden ringlets of butternut squash, like Rapunzel's hair, will tumble from our forks, twizzles of celeriac and coils of marrow will adorn our plates in a rococo flourish.

Now, I know what you're thinking: 'She will soon tire of it and it'll end up in that cupboard with the rest of the rejects.' But you're wrong. This time it's different; this time it's love. I've seen the food future and it's spiral-shaped. In any case, there just isn't any more space in that cupboard!



This MONTH...

I'm making



A wreath for the door. I'll make mine from ivy, berries and plastic farm animals sprayed gold!

I'm baking



Cinnamon biscuits dusted with snow-white icing sugar. Yummy!

I'm growing



Poinsettia. My late mother loved them – they're a reminder of an adored mum and Grandmother.

Photos: Claire Collins, Getty Images, StockFood **Caroline wears:** Top, James Lakeland. Jeans, Wizard. Earrings, gold bangle, all Buckley London. Cuff, ring, both New Look. Cuff, Dorothy Perkins. Long necklace, Allusions at BHS. Tassel necklace, long necklace, both Wallis. Choker, Atelier Swarovski at Cadenza

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you fancy*

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8



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Why not experiment with new flavours by coating the cheese truffles in whatever herbs or spices you have to hand. Try rolling them in paprika for a bit of a kick!





CHEESE TRUFFLES & EMMENTAL SHORTBREAD

Great for a dinner party, or as a gift for a cheese lover

CHEESE TRUFFLES

Makes 8 balls

Prep: 15 mins (for each mixture)

FOR THE FILLING:

- ❁ 100g/3½oz full-fat cream cheese
- ❁ 75g/3oz mature cheddar, grated, or 125g/4oz French goats' cheese

TO FLAVOUR:

- ❁ Choose from ½tsp ras el hanout, 1tsp sumac, ½tsp za'atar, ½tsp jerk paste, ½tsp creamed horseradish or 1tsp chopped chives

FOR THE COATING:

- ❁ Finely chopped parsley, toasted sesame seeds, finely chopped dried apricots or chopped hazelnuts

- ❶ Mash together the cream cheese and cheddar (or goats' cheese, including the rind) with your chosen flavouring – or divide the mixture between bowls and add a different flavour to each one.
- ❷ Shape mixture into 8 small balls and roll each in a coating of your choice. Chill for about 1 hr. Serve with cocktail sticks.

EMMENTAL SHORTBREAD

Makes about 16

Prep: 30 mins, plus chilling

Baking: 10 mins

- ❁ 100g/3½oz butter, softened
- ❁ 75g/3oz Emmental, finely grated
- ❁ 100g/3½oz plain flour
- ❁ 1tsp caraway seeds

YOU WILL NEED: A 6cm/2¼in round biscuit cutter and a large baking tray, lined with baking parchment

- ❶ Using a wooden spoon, mix together the butter and cheese, then beat in the flour to make a soft dough.
- ❷ Wrap the dough in cling film and chill for 15 mins until firm. Roll out chilled dough on to a lightly floured work surface and cut out biscuit shapes with the cutter.
- ❸ Place biscuits on the baking tray and sprinkle over the caraway seeds. Bake for 8 to 10 mins until pale golden. Allow to cool on the tray before serving with the cheese truffles. You can store the shortbread in a tin for 3 to 4 days.



SQUASH, CRANBERRY & CHILLI CHUTNEY

*This is ideal for that difficult-to-buy-for man in your life.
Just add a chunk of his favourite cheese and some biscuits*

**Makes 3 x 500g/1lb 2oz jars (this
is easily doubled if making as gifts)**

Prep: 35 mins, plus setting

Cook: 1 hr 30 mins

- ❁ **400g/14oz butternut squash,
peeled and diced into
1cm¹/₂in cubes**
- ❁ **1 large cooking apple, peeled
and roughly chopped**
- ❁ **1 large onion, peeled and diced**
- ❁ **1 orange, peeled, segmented
and chopped**
- ❁ **100g/3¹/₂oz dried dates**
- ❁ **2tsp salt**
- ❁ **3cm/1¹/₄in piece ginger, grated**
- ❁ **Pinch of grated nutmeg**
- ❁ **2tsp pickling spice**
- ❁ **¹/₂tsp chilli flakes**
- ❁ **300ml/¹/₂pt distilled white vinegar**
- ❁ **250g/9oz demerara sugar**

❁ **200g/7oz fresh or frozen
cranberries**

**YOU WILL NEED: A preserving
pan and 3 jars**

- ❶ Place all the ingredients (except the sugar and cranberries) in the preserving pan and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer gently for 30 mins until the mixture is soft.
- ❷ Add the sugar and stir over the heat until the sugar has dissolved, then simmer gently for 30 to 40 mins until the mixture is thick and pulpy.
- ❸ Add the cranberries and cook for a further 15 to 20 mins until the cranberries are soft and cooked.
- ❹ Spoon the mixture (while still hot) into hot sterilised jars (see page 9), seal and store for at least 1 week before eating. This will keep for six to 12 months.







RED CHILLI JELLY

This is one for spice lovers. It's delicious in stir-fries, swirled into sour cream for a dip, or served with chicken

Makes 500g/1lb 2oz (which can be decanted into small jars)

Prep: 10 mins, plus overnight straining

Cook: 40 mins

❁ **1kg/2lb 4oz Bramley apples**

❁ **100ml/4fl oz cider vinegar**

❁ **450g/1lb granulated sugar**

❁ **3 red chillies**

YOU WILL NEED: A jelly or straining bag and 5 jars

❶ Roughly chop the apples and place in a large pan (peel and pips, too) with just enough water to cover them. Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer for about 20 mins until the apples have become a thick pulp. Add the cider vinegar and cook for 5 mins.

❷ Add the apples to the jelly or straining bag suspended over a bowl to catch the juice. Allow it to drip for at least 8 hrs, or overnight. Do not squeeze the bag or the jelly will be cloudy.

❸ Pour 550ml/1pt of the apple juice into a large saucepan. Add the sugar and heat gently until it dissolves.

❹ Finely chop the chillies, removing the seeds, if you prefer. Add to the apple mixture and boil rapidly for 10 to 15 mins. To test if the mixture is set, remove the pan from the heat, pour a teaspoonful on a chilled saucer and leave to set for a few mins. Run your finger through the jelly – if it wrinkles, it's at setting point. You will also notice the mixture becoming thick and sticky on the wooden spoon.

❺ Pour the jelly into clean sterilised jars (see tip below), partially seal with screw-top lids and leave to set. Tighten the lids and store for up to 6 months. To give jars as gifts, cover each lid with a small piece of paper or material and secure with a ribbon.

To sterilise jars Choose heatproof jars with clip tops or plastic-coated screw tops. First wash them, then rinse and place in a hot oven – gas mark 4/180°C (160°C in a fan oven) – for 10 mins. Then fill as directed.





COCONUT GARLANDS

*These are ideal for giving to friends on a gluten-free diet.
You could even drizzle them with melted dark chocolate*

Makes 9

Prep: 5 mins

Cook: 15 mins

❁ **3 egg whites**

❁ **150g/5oz caster sugar**

❁ **225g/8oz desiccated coconut**

❁ **5 glacé cherries, cut in half**

❁ **25g/1oz green sugar paste**

❁ **Icing sugar, for dusting**

**YOU WILL NEED: A 7cm/2¾in round
biscuit cutter, small holly cutter and
a baking tray, lined with baking
parchment**

- ❶ Heat the oven to gas mark 4/180°C (160°C in a fan oven).
- ❷ In a small bowl, mix together the egg whites, caster sugar and desiccated coconut with a fork to make a soft paste.
- ❸ Place the biscuit cutter on the baking tray and spoon the mixture around the inside rim of the cutter, leaving a small hole in the middle. Press the mixture down firmly with your fingers to make a garland shape. Remove the cutter and repeat the process to make another 8 rings. Add a glacé cherry half to each.
- ❹ Bake garlands for 12 mins until they are very lightly browned and the mixture feels firm. Leave to cool on the tray.
- ❺ Meanwhile, roll out the sugar paste on a work surface dusted with icing sugar, and cut out 18 holly leaves with the cutter. Place on kitchen towel and, when the coconut garlands have cooled, arrange one on either side of each glacé cherry and press in so that they stick. These biscuits will keep for 1 week in a cake tin.





*These are
free from
gluten!*





These cupcakes will keep for 2 to 3 days, but the tree decorations will become soft, so only add them just before you are ready to serve.



NARNIA CUPCAKES

These cute cupcakes look really impressive but they're surprisingly simple to make!

Makes 12

Prep: 45 mins, plus drying

Cook: 15 mins

FOR THE CAKES:

❄ 125g/4oz natural yoghurt

❄ 100ml/4fl oz sunflower oil

❄ 200g/7oz caster sugar

❄ ½tsp vanilla extract

❄ 3 eggs

❄ 225g/8oz self-raising flour

❄ 1tsp baking powder

FOR THE ICING:

❄ 180g pack full-fat cream cheese

❄ 100g/4oz icing sugar, plus extra

❄ 150ml/5fl oz double cream

❄ 1tbsp hazelnut liqueur (optional)

FOR THE DECORATIONS:

❄ Green paste food colouring

❄ White flower & modelling paste
(from Sainsbury's)

❄ Pearly 100s & 1000s (from
Waitrose)

YOU WILL NEED: A cupcake tin, lined with 12 paper cases, a piping bag, a set of PME Christmas tree cutters (from cake decorating stores), a baking tray, lined with baking parchment

❶ First, make the tree decorations. Add a little green food colouring to the flower paste and knead until evenly mixed.

❷ Dust a work surface with icing sugar, and roll out the flower paste very thinly. Using the largest tree cutter, cut out 12 trees, then cut out 6 with the medium cutter, and 6 with the small cutter. Put them on the baking tray and leave to dry for at least 8 hrs, or overnight, until firm.

❸ Heat the oven to gas mark 4/180°C (160°C in a fan oven). To make the cakes, whisk together the yoghurt, oil, sugar, vanilla and eggs, then fold in the flour and baking powder.

❹ Divide the mixture between the cupcake cases and bake for 15 mins until golden and firm to the touch. Leave to cool in the tin for 5 mins, then turn out on to a wire rack to cool completely.

❺ To make the icing, beat together the cream cheese and icing sugar until smooth, then add the cream and liqueur and whisk until thick enough to pipe.

❻ Ice the cakes and sprinkle over some 100s & 1000s. Add 1 large and 1 small or medium tree to each cupcake.



STOLLEN CROWN

Filled with marzipan, cranberries and orange zest, this is a scrummy twist on the traditional stollen recipe

Prep: 45 mins, plus proving

Bake: 30 mins

FOR THE DOUGH:

❁ **250g/9oz strong white bread flour**

❁ **25g/1oz butter**

❁ **1tsp caster sugar**

❁ **½tsp salt**

❁ **2tsp fast acting or easy bake yeast**

❁ **125ml/4fl oz milk**

❁ **1 egg and 1 egg yolk**

FOR THE FILLING:

❁ **25g/1oz butter, melted**

❁ **50g/2oz dried figs, finely chopped**

❁ **75g/3oz dried cranberries**

❁ **75g/3oz pecans, chopped**

❁ **Zest 1 orange**

❁ **125g/4oz marzipan, grated**

❁ **Pinch of ground cinnamon**

FOR THE GLAZE:

❁ **3tbsp apricot jam**

❁ **100g/3½oz icing sugar**

❶ Place the flour in a bowl, add the butter and rub in with your fingers until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Stir in the sugar, salt and yeast. Warm

milk until it is just hand-hot, then stir into the flour with the egg and egg yolk. Mix to a soft, slightly sticky dough, then turn out on to a lightly floured work surface and knead by hand for about 10 mins until smooth and elastic (or for 5 mins in an electric mixer with a dough hook).

❷ Return the dough to the bowl and cover with oiled cling film. Leave in a warm place to rise for at least 45 mins or until doubled in size.

❸ Meanwhile, mix together most of the melted butter and all the other filling ingredients, then set aside.

❹ Turn out the dough and knead lightly, then roll and stretch into a rectangle about 23x35cm/9x14in. Brush over a little of the reserved melted butter.

❺ Sprinkle the filling ingredients evenly over the dough then, starting from one long side, roll up the dough like a Swiss roll. Using a sharp knife, cut the dough almost in half lengthways. Lift one piece of dough over the other, then twist it while continuing to stretch it into a spiral. Keeping the filling in place, try to stretch





the dough to make it longer, then join the ends together to make a ring. Place on the prepared baking tray.

⑥ Cover with oiled cling film and leave to rise again for about 30 mins, or until doubled in size. Heat the oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven) and bake the crown for 20 mins, then reduce the temperature to gas mark 4/180°C

(160°C in a fan oven) and cook for a further 10 mins.

⑦ Remove from the oven, leave to cool on a wire rack, then brush a little jam over the top. Mix the icing sugar with just enough water to make a thick pouring consistency and drizzle it over. It's delicious eaten lightly warmed the following day, and is best within 2 days.



You could
use any cookie
cutter to make
these biscuits.
Why not make
a hole in one
corner of each
before baking,
then thread on to
ribbon to hang
on your tree?



CHRISTMAS COOKIES

There's something so festive about gingerbread biscuits and, presented in a pretty box, these make a lovely gift

Makes 12

Prep: 25 mins, plus cooling

Baking: 15 mins

❁ **100g/3½oz dark muscovado sugar**

❁ **3tbsp golden syrup**

❁ **125g/4oz butter, diced**

❁ **½tsp bicarbonate of soda**

❁ **225g/8oz plain flour, plus extra for dusting**

❁ **2tbsp ground ginger**

❁ **8 red or yellow boiled sweets**

YOU WILL NEED: 2 baking trays, lined with baking parchment, alphabet and star-shaped cookie cutters

❶ Add 3tbsp water to a saucepan with the sugar and syrup. Stir until the sugar has dissolved, then bring to the boil. Remove from the heat, add the butter and stir until melted, then whisk in the bicarbonate of soda (it will foam a little). Add the flour and ginger and beat well to make a soft dough. Wrap in cling

film and chill for 3 hrs, or overnight, until firm enough to roll out.

❷ Heat the oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven). Dust a work surface with flour and roll out the dough to the thickness of a £1 coin, then cut it into 12 rectangular biscuits that are a little bit bigger than your alphabet cutters. Cut out letters to spell 'Noel' from 4 biscuits and place them on the baking tray, with a little room between each. Cut out star shapes from 4 other biscuits, and place the biscuits on the trays, then place the cut-out star shapes on top of the remaining 4 biscuits.

❸ Place the boiled sweets in a bowl and cut them into small pieces with a pair of scissors. Fill the letter- and star-shaped holes with the broken sweets.

❹ Bake the biscuits for 10 to 12 mins or until just turning darker brown at the edges. Leave them to cool completely before removing from the tin. These will keep in a cake tin for 2 weeks.





RICE KRISPIES TREES

These are so popular with children and can be decorated with any sweets – let them choose and help you make them

Makes 6 to 8 (depending on size)

Prep: 15 mins

❁ **50g/2oz butter**

❁ **300g/11oz mini marshmallows**

❁ **Green paste food colouring**

❁ **175g/6oz Rice Krispies cereal**

❁ **Mini Smarties**

❁ **1 pack Rolos**

**YOU WILL NEED: A baking tray,
lined with baking parchment**

❶ Heat the butter in a medium pan until melted. Add the marshmallows and heat gently until melted, then add a little green food colouring and stir until everything is evenly mixed together.

❷ Add the Rice Krispies and stir until they are well coated. Using damp hands, shape the mixture into cone shapes to look like Christmas trees and place on the baking tray. Decorate as soon as possible while the marshmallow is still a little sticky. To do this, place the Smarties around the trees, then stand each tree on a Rolo. Leave at room temperature for at least 1 hr until set.

❸ Arrange on a cake stand with a few extra Smarties scattered around, if you like, or wrap in cellophane to give as a gift. They will keep for 3 to 4 days in an airtight container.





If the marshmallow sets too quickly and the Smarties or Rolos won't stick to the trees, you can use a little buttercream to secure them in place.





SHORTBREAD SNOWMAN LOLLIES

These are so much fun and great for kids to bake as gifts for their teachers or to sell at the school Christmas fair

Makes about 12

Prep: 45 mins

Bake: 15 mins

❁ **275g/10oz plain flour, plus extra**

❁ **200g/7oz firm butter, diced**

❁ **100g/3½oz icing sugar**

❁ **2 egg yolks**

TO DECORATE:

❁ **Lolly sticks (available from Lakeland)**

❁ **Blue paste food colouring**

❁ **4tbsp granulated sugar**

❁ **250g/9oz royal icing sugar**

❁ **Mini Smarties**

YOU WILL NEED: A 7cm/2¾in round biscuit cutter, 2 baking trays, lined with baking parchment, 2 piping bags, fine writing nozzle and small star nozzle

❶ Heat the oven to gas mark 6/200°C (180°C in a fan oven).

❷ Place the flour and butter in a bowl and rub together with your fingers until it makes crumbs. Stir in the icing sugar, add the yolks and squeeze the mixture

together until it binds into a dough. Roll out on a floured work surface and cut out 12 biscuits, re-rolling dough as you go.

❸ Place biscuits on the baking tray and carefully push a lolly stick into each one. Bake for 12 to 14 mins or until just turning golden brown at the edges.

❹ Add a drop of food colouring to the granulated sugar and rub together with your fingers until you get the desired colour. Set aside.

❺ Make the royal icing as directed on the pack (keep it in an airtight container when not in use). Spread a little icing on each biscuit to make a hat and sprinkle over a little blue sugar. Put about 3tbsp icing in a piping bag fitted with a small star nozzle and pipe the edges of the hats and the pom-poms. Put the remaining icing in a piping bag fitted with a fine writing nozzle. Pipe on faces, using it to attach the Smarties for eyes and noses. These will keep for 1 week in a cake tin.





PISTACHIO MARZIPAN DELICE

*This cute box of home-made sweets can be served
as petits fours after a festive gathering*

Makes about 20

Prep: 1 hr

- ❁ **175g/6oz shelled pistachios**
- ❁ **75g/3oz caster sugar**
- ❁ **75g/3oz icing sugar, plus extra
for dusting**
- ❁ **5g pack egg white powder**
- ❁ **100g/3½oz marzipan**
- ❁ **Red and green paste food
colourings**

YOU WILL NEED: **Foil petit four cases,
blossom and daisy plunger cutters
(available from cakecraft.co.uk,
squires-shop.com or Lakeland),
pearly 100s & 1000s (from Waitrose)**

❶ Add the pistachios, caster sugar and icing sugar to a food processor and blend until very finely chopped. Make up the egg white powder as directed on the pack, then add to the pistachio mixture and continue to blend until it forms a stiff paste. If necessary, add

a little more egg white or icing sugar, as needed.

❷ Turn out the mixture on to a work surface lightly dusted with icing sugar and roll half of it into a long sausage shape, then cut into 3cm lengths. Roll the remainder into marble-sized balls. Place each one in a petit four case.

❸ Cut the marzipan in half; colour one half with red food colouring and the other with green. Roll out each one on a work surface dusted with icing sugar and use the cutters to cut out blossoms and daisies. As you make each one, press them on to the sweets, using the plunger to make them stick into the pistachio mixture. Shape tiny green leaves and add to the flowers, or place together with tiny red berries to look like sprigs of holly. Try to make 3 to 4 of each variety so they look pretty together in a box. They will keep for 2 weeks in a tin.









CHOCOLATE & CANDY CANE CHRISTMAS TREE

This is so simple to make – get the kids involved and they can give it to a grandparent for a bit of festive fun

Makes 1

Prep: 10 mins, plus setting time

Cook: 5 mins

❁ **200g bar dark chocolate**

❁ **100g/3½oz white chocolate**

TO DECORATE:

❁ **2 candy canes**

❁ **Edible Christmas decorations such as sugar paste snowflakes, royal icing snowmen or gingerbread men**

YOU WILL NEED: A baking tray, lined with baking parchment

- ❶ Break up both the dark and white chocolates and place in separate bowls over pans of gently simmering water. Stir until melted.
- ❷ Pour the dark chocolate on to the baking tray, guiding it roughly into a Christmas tree shape. Don't worry about making it a perfect shape – part of the fun is that it will look unique. Allow to cool for 10 mins, then drizzle the white chocolate over the top.
- ❸ Break up the candy canes and scatter them over the chocolate tree, together with the other decorations, before it has set.
- ❹ Leave it to set in a cold place for about 30 mins until firm. Wrap in cellophane to give as a gift.





LEMONY SHORTBREAD LABELS

Personalise your gifts by baking your own gift tags, or use them as place settings or tree decorations

Makes about 12

Prep: 1 hr

Bake: 15 mins

❁ **1 lemon, zested, and 1tbsp juice**

❁ **100g/3½oz butter**

❁ **100g/3½oz caster sugar**

❁ **175g/8oz plain flour, plus extra**

❁ **1 egg yolk**

TO DECORATE:

❁ **250g/9oz royal icing sugar**

❁ **Red and green food colourings**

YOU WILL NEED: 2 baking trays, a ruler, drinking straw or skewer, fine paintbrushes, ribbon, 2 piping bags and a fine plain writing nozzle

❶ Heat the oven to gas mark 4/180°C (160°C in a fan oven).

❷ Place the zest, butter, sugar and flour in a food processor and blend until it makes fine crumbs. Add the egg yolk and lemon juice, 1tsp at a time (you may not need it all), and blend again for a few seconds.

Gather mixture into a ball and chill if necessary.

❸ On a work surface dusted with flour, roll out dough into a large rectangle the thickness of a £1 coin. Using a ruler, mark the dough into rectangles about 6x4cm/2¾x1½in, then cut and place on the baking trays. Make a hole in each with a straw or skewer (for the ribbon).

❹ Bake for about 12 mins until just golden at the edges, then allow to cool for 10 mins before removing from the baking tray to cool completely.

❺ Mix the icing sugar, as directed on the pack, to make a thick piping consistency. Place about a quarter of the mixture in a piping bag fitted with a fine plain nozzle and pipe an outline around each biscuit. Mix the remaining icing with enough water to make a very thick pouring consistency (so the icing flows out easily). Place in a plastic piping bag, snip off the end and pipe inside the outline.





- ⑥ Reduce the oven to the lowest setting and bake for 30 mins to dry the icing.
- ⑦ To decorate the labels, use the paintbrushes, dipped into the different

coloured food colourings, to write a message and paint a decoration on the icing. Leave to dry for 10 mins, then thread with ribbon. These will keep for 1 week in a cake tin.





BOOZY CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

Rich and decadent – definitely one for the grown-ups!

Makes around 30

Prep: 40 mins Cook: 10 mins

- ❄ **200ml/7fl oz double cream**
- ❄ **100g/3½oz soft brown sugar**
- ❄ **2 x 100g bars dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids), broken into pieces**
- ❄ **50g/2oz butter**
- ❄ **1-2tsp cherry brandy (taste and add more, if you like)**
- ❄ **1-2tsp crème de cassis (taste and add more, if you like)**

FOR THE COATING:

- ❄ **100g bar white chocolate**
- ❄ **100g bar milk chocolate**

YOU WILL NEED: 30 mini paper cases

- ❶ Heat cream and sugar in a pan until they just come to the boil. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.
- ❷ Add dark chocolate and butter to a heatproof bowl over a pan of barely simmering water, stirring occasionally, until melted. Pour cream mixture over melted chocolate and stir until combined (it will become glossy and smooth).

Add a pinch of salt, stir again, and divide mixture between 2 bowls, adding brandy to 1 bowl and cassis to the other. Leave to cool a little, then chill until set (3 to 4 hrs).

❸ To make truffles, use 2 teaspoons: scoop out a little of the mixture using one, then shape with the other (this is easier than rolling in your hands, which will warm the chocolate too much). Work as quickly as you can, then place them on a plate and return to the fridge to firm up.

❹ When ready to assemble, prepare coatings: finely grate half of the white and milk chocolates on to separate plates, then melt the other halves in separate bowls (using the same method as in step 2) and leave to cool slightly.

❺ To decorate, coat a few truffles with grated chocolate and set aside on greaseproof paper. Dip some in melted white chocolate, others in melted milk chocolate, and add to the greaseproof paper. Return to the fridge to chill. When set, transfer truffles to paper cases, then arrange in a pretty box.



SPICED ORANGE WHISKY

Turn a bottle of whisky into a rich orange-flavoured liqueur – delicious over ice or even drizzled over ice cream

Makes about 900ml/1½pt

Prep: 15 mins, plus 2 weeks marinating

- ✿ **1 orange**
- ✿ **50g/2oz dark muscovado sugar**
- ✿ **4tbsp Seville orange marmalade**
- ✿ **2 cinnamon sticks**
- ✿ **1 vanilla pod**
- ✿ **800ml/27fl oz blended Scotch whisky**
- ✿ **A few satsumas, sliced, for serving (optional)**

❶ Using a potato peeler, thinly pare the orange peel, then cut into fine strips. Cut the orange in half, then juice into a small pan. Add the orange rind, sugar, marmalade, cinnamon sticks and vanilla pod. Heat until the sugar dissolves.

❷ Add the orange mixture to the whisky and pour into sterilised bottles (see tip below). Screw on the top and leave for 2 weeks, shaking occasionally. Strain the whisky through a sieve, discarding the orange peel, cinnamon sticks and vanilla pod, then rebottle. Serve over ice, adding satsuma slices, if you like. The mixture will keep for 1 month.

To sterilise bottles Choose 2 or 3 heatproof bottles (depending on size) with clip tops or plastic-coated screw tops. Wash and rinse the bottles, then place in a hot oven – gas mark 4/180°C (160°C in a fan oven) – for 10 mins, and fill as directed.









WHITE CHOCOLATE LIQUEUR

This is velvety smooth, rich and boozy – serve it in small glasses after a meal, or give as a gift in a pretty bottle

Makes 800ml/28fl oz

Prep: 20 mins

-  **250ml/9fl oz double cream**
-  **150ml/5fl oz sweetened condensed milk**
-  **200g/7oz white chocolate, grated**
-  **200ml/7fl oz white rum**

- ❶ Place the cream and condensed milk in a small pan and bring just to the boil. Add the chocolate and stir until dissolved.
- ❷ Remove from the heat, leave to cool for 5 mins, then stir in the rum.
- ❸ Pour into sterilised bottles (see tip page 30). Place the tops on the bottles but only screw closed slightly. Leave them to cool, then tighten the tops. Store the liqueur in the fridge and use within 1 month.



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